

More than Just a Roof over Their Heads

Migrant Accommodation Centres and the Assimilation of “New Australians” 1947-1960



Karen Agutter

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of History
Faculty of Arts
University of Adelaide
May 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Section 1 : Introduction and Literature Review | 10 |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 11 |
| 1.1 Mode of Presentation of the Thesis | 14 |
| 1.2 Manuscripts Contributing to this Thesis | 15 |
| 1.3 Overview of the Thesis..... | 16 |
| 1.4 Methodology | 19 |
| Chapter 2 Literature Overview..... | 22 |
| 2.1 Literature Pertaining to Assimilation | 24 |
| 2.2 Literature Pertaining to the Hostel System..... | 33 |
| Section 2 : Migration Policy, Assimilation and the Context of the Migrant Accommodation System | 42 |
| Chapter 3 Migration Policy and Assimilation | 43 |
| 3.1 Migration Policy Background | 43 |
| 3.2 Basis of Assimilation..... | 43 |
| Chapter 4 More than Just a Roof over Their Heads: Review of the Hostel System | 48 |
| 4.1 The Establishment and Operation of the Migrant Accommodation System..... | 48 |
| 4.2 The Hostel as a Liminal Space..... | 54 |
| Section 3 : Implementation of Assimilation Policy within the Migrant Hostel..... | 58 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Chapter 5 English Essential: Education of New Migrants | 60 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 60 |
| 5.2 Pre-arrival Education..... | 65 |
| 5.3 Education in Reception and Training Centres..... | 67 |
| 5.4 Education Post Reception and Training Centres..... | 75 |
| 5.5 Child Education..... | 83 |
| 5.6 Article 1: Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia | 91 |
| Chapter 6 Mobilising the Public: The Role of Volunteer Organizations and the Church in Aiding Assimilation..... | 107 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 108 |
| 6.2 The Social Welfare Section..... | 109 |
| 6.3 The Good Neighbour Movement | 110 |
| 6.4 Community Organisations..... | 115 |
| 6.5 The Role of the Church | 122 |
| 6.6 Effectiveness | 130 |
| Chapter 7 Article 2: “Sport Brings Us Together”: Sport and the Assimilation of New Australians..... | 138 |
| Chapter 8 Article 3: Lights, Camera, Assimilation: Introducing “New Australians” to the Australian way of life through film..... | 165 |
| Chapter 9 Article 4: Her Majesty’s Newest Subjects: National Celebrations as Migrant Assimilationist Tools..... | 189 |
| Section 4 : Impact of Policy and Hostels..... | 220 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 10 Article 5: The 'unwanted' and 'non-compliant': 'Unsupported mothers' as 'failures' and agents in Australia's migrant holding centres..... | 222 |
| Chapter 11 Article 6: Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children..... | 244 |
| Chapter 12 Article 7: Food and the challenge to identity for post-war refugee women in Australia..... | 253 |
| Section 5 : Conclusion | 277 |
| Section 6 : Composite Bibliography | 281 |
| Archival Sources | 281 |
| Newspapers and Periodicals | 288 |
| Secondary Sources | 290 |
| Section 7 : Appendices | 306 |
| Appendix 1. Understanding Ethnic Residential Cluster Formation: new perspectives from South Australia's migrant hostels | 307 |
| Appendix 2. Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System..... | 323 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Displaced Persons from Europe, en-route to Bonegilla..... | 10 |
| Figure 2: Woodside Centre, circa 1950, Stanislaw and Szczepan Pindral, Polish Displaced Persons | 42 |
| Figure 3: UNESCO Questionnaire | 58 |
| Figure 4: English class at Bathurst Reception Centre NSW. | 60 |
| Figure 5 : Toc H Camp for Girls (1956) – girls from Woodside Migrant Hostel, Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission and “underprivileged families” | 107 |
| Figure 6: Migrant Guides at Woodside Centre South Australia. | 122 |
| Figure 7: Huts used as Churches on “Church Row” at Woodside Centre | 124 |

Note: Original spelling and grammar is maintained in quotations and archival references. Page numbering in the tables of contents and figures refers to pages in the body of the thesis. Embedded articles have their own pages numbers as published.

Cover Photograph: Woodside Centre entrance, 1949. South Australian Migration Museum photographic collection PN04092. Courtesy William and Claudia Laanekorb

Abstract

Between 1947 and 1960 almost 1 million assisted immigrants and refugees arrived in Australia. These migrants completely changed the face of the nation and, for the first time in our history, the majority came not from the United Kingdom, but from Continental Europe. This radical shift from previous immigration practice meant that authorities needed to gain the support of the wider population. For the post-war mass migration scheme to succeed the Australian public needed to be conditioned toward accepting large numbers of non-English speaking migrants; a goal best achieved by the promise that migrants would, through assimilation, adopt an “Australian way of life”. The Australian Government understood that successful assimilation would not occur through policy alone but would necessarily be affected through the mixing of “old” and “new” Australians. Working together, migrants would learn English, adopt the Australian way of life and work towards Australian citizenship - the ultimate goal and measure of successful assimilation.

This thesis contributes to the knowledge in two related areas: firstly; a broader contextual understanding of the role of the migrant accommodation system in assimilationist policy in the post-war period; and secondly, a more nuanced understanding of the nature and intent of the policy of assimilation. I consider how migrant accommodation centres provided both a planned and an opportunistic environment for the assimilation of non-English speaking migrants and refugees. In doing so, I argue that Australia’s assimilation policy was more multifaceted and gendered than has been generally accepted. In the post-multicultural world, the lens through which scholars have considered this

period of migration has distorted the understanding of what and how assimilation programs operated and the importance that was attached to not only educating migrants in the model Australian way of life, but also convincing old Australians of the benefits of the mass migration scheme.


Through extensive archival research, this work identifies the key role that migrant accommodation centres played in the assimilation of new arrivals. The thesis moves beyond previous considerations of these centres as substandard temporary housing to argue that they were more than roofs over the heads of migrants; rather they provided an important liminal space for early assimilation activity to occur. Through a variety of examples (such as the content of language lessons, the work of voluntary organisations, the introduction of kindergartens, participation in sport, the showing of films, and the celebration of commemorative events) this thesis shows that the process of assimilating new arrivals within migrant accommodation centres was in fact all-encompassing and moved far beyond the previously assumed importance of the Good Neighbour Movement as the primary agent of assimilation. Finally, the thesis considers some of the negative consequences of this all-encompassing approach with particular reference to an often neglected cohort of migrants, women and children.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I acknowledge that copyright of published works contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.


Karen Agutter
May 2017

Acknowledgements

The research for this thesis was supported by a Linkage Grant from the Australian Research Council [grant number LP120100553], ‘Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants’ to the University of Adelaide in collaboration with the Migration Museum and in partnership with the cities of Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield, State Records of South Australia, and the Vietnamese Community in Australia (South Australian Chapter).

I wish to thank my supervisors Professor Rachel Ankeny and Professor Amanda Nettelbeck for their support and encouragement.

Being part of the amazing Hostel Stories team has been a great inspiration to me and afforded opportunities to collaborate cross institutionally in particular with Dr Catherine Kevin in areas where our research interests intersect. A special mention to my fellow PhD candidate Daniella Pilla: our conversations have always been motivating and informative.

As with all major undertakings it is impossible to thank everyone who has helped and inspired this thesis; however, these acknowledgements would not be complete without mentioning the staff in the interlibrary loan section of the Barr Smith library and the staff at the National Archives of Australia, especially Jan Hall and Jeremy Sibbald in the Adelaide office.

Thank you everyone.

Section 1 : Introduction and Literature Review



Figure 1: Displaced Persons from Europe, en-route to Bonegilla

NAA: A12111, 1/1947/3/5

Chapter 1 Introduction

In August 1946, just a year after the close of the Second World War, the annual Commonwealth and State Ministers Conference discussed the future of Australian immigration. Despite on-going concerns about the nation's low population growth, the resultant issues of national security and the emerging desire to grow the national economy, the Conference resolved to maintain the immigration policies and expectations of the pre-War period which saw a strong bias towards British migrants as the natural cultural fit for Australia. Indeed, in regard to other migrants, the Conference emphatically stated that it was 'opposed to the principle of large-scale group settlements of foreigners irrespective of nationality'.¹ In December 1947, fourteen months later, the first of over 170,000 Displaced People (DPs) from Europe arrived. Over the following decade, these refugees would be followed by thousands of other non-English speaking refugees and migrants as Australia cast its net for prospective immigrants ever wider through the negotiation of assisted passage agreements and the resettlement of refugees escaping the consequences of Soviet occupation and communism.

This momentous shift in immigration policy has been well documented in Australian history.² However, for this mass migration program of non-English speaking migrants to succeed, a second policy, that is, the promise of the

¹ *The Sun*, Sydney, NSW, 20 August 1946, '70,000 Migrants Yearly Planned', p 8.

² See for example Richards, E., *Destination Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.

assimilation of new arrivals into the Australian way of life³, was essential. As will be outlined in the summary literature review in Chapter 2, from the time of the first DP arrivals, scholars and other interested parties have studied the intent, application, and consequences of the official policy of assimilation. However, little consideration has been given to the role the promise of assimilation played in the conditioning of the Australian public to the mass arrival of post-war migrants, especially through the mixing of “old” and “new” Australians.

Similarly, the complex system of migrant accommodation centres located across the country has largely been condemned for the inadequate shared facilities, inedible food and prison like conditions that were provided.⁴ These centres, which developed initially as a consequence of the severe housing and materials shortage and a desire to prevent competition between new arrivals and returning servicemen and their families, provided temporary accommodation for refugee and assisted migrants. Accommodation centres, however, also provided a liminal space for new arrivals to learn the English language and gain an introduction to the Australian way of life. This thesis will argue that the services and activities within these centres evolved, like the structures themselves, in line with the implementation of the assimilationist policy of the day.

It is important to make clear at the outset that this thesis does not aim to defend the policy of assimilation, nor does it deny the negative consequences and suffering that many migrants felt as a result of the execution of this policy. In

³ This phrase was widely used in 1940s and 50s Australia. It came to represent an ill-defined set of quintessentially Australian values revolving around the white, middle-class, nuclear family. This concept is discussed in the articles included in subsequent sections.

⁴ See for example Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1966, pp 25-29.

fact, in the final section of this thesis some of these consequences will be considered. Similarly, I do not propose that migrant accommodation centres were ideal introductions to Australia for the thousands of people who passed through them. The experiences of these residents were as individual and diverse as the migrants themselves. What I will argue is that underpinning the policy of assimilation was more than the expectation that new arrivals would meld quickly and seamlessly into the Australian way of life. The promise of the assimilation of non-English speaking migrants was also an important part of the conditioning of the Australian public into the acceptance of what was a radical shift in immigration policy. Through the mixing of old and New Australians,⁵ there was a deliberate intent to educate both migrants and Australians into an understanding and acceptance of the mass migration program. Consequently, I will contend that the migrant accommodation centres were more than roofs over the heads of new arrivals; rather they played an important role in the two-way nature of this policy.

⁵ The term New Australian was coined by Arthur Calwell in the late 1940s as an alternative to the pejorative titles in use, namely 'Balts' and 'Reffos'. It also fitted with the wider rhetoric of the assimilationist policy i.e. the expectation that new arrivals would become Australian citizens. The term New Australian soon took on its own derogative connotations. In this thesis I use the term New Australian as a descriptor to distinguish from British migrants and what I call old Australians, that is, those who were citizens.

1.1 *Mode of Presentation of the Thesis*

This research is presented as a combination of conventional written narrative material presented as typescript and publication material that has either been published, or has been submitted for external publication and is currently under consideration. For each embedded publication there is a statement of authorship which clearly states my original contribution to the content of the paper and also lists any other contributors to that publication.

Sub-section 1.2 below lists the embedded manuscripts in the order of appearance in this thesis, sub-section 1.3 provides an overview of the entire thesis, including situating the publication manuscripts within the overall structure and argument being presented while sub-section 1.4 discusses the methodology applied to the collection and analysis of research undertaken.

Due to the nature of externally published work, many of the manuscripts require introductory and background material (including literature review) to situate the arguments being presented which may seem to be somewhat repetitive when the manuscripts are read in sequence. Different journals also have different referencing conventions and bibliographical requirements. Although each embedded work stands alone, all are connected by the themes that speak to the overarching aims of the thesis. A composite bibliography of all referenced works, both in the conventional and published sections, is included at the end of the thesis.

1.2 Manuscripts Contributing to this Thesis

The following manuscripts, listed in order of presentation, form an integral part of this thesis. Each article considers, through a different cultural lens, the way in which assimilation policy played out for, or impacted on, migrants during their periods of residence in accommodation centres. They represent a focus on the everyday domain of domestic life as being integral to the goals of assimilationist policy.

1. Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia', *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016, pp 277-91.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2016.1207811>

2. Agutter, K., “‘Sport Brings Us Together’”: Sport and the Assimilation of New Australian’, unpublished manuscript submitted to the *International Journal of the History of Sport*.

3. Agutter, K., ‘Lights, Camera, Assimilation: Introducing “New Australians” to the Australian way of life through film’, unpublished manuscript submitted to *Film and History*.

4. Agutter, K., ‘Her Majesty’s Newest Subjects: Assimilating non-English speaking migrants in post-war Australia’, unpublished manuscript submitted to *History Australia*.

5. Kevin, C. and Agutter, K. ‘The ‘unwanted’ and ‘non-compliants’: ‘unsupported mothers’ as ‘failures’ and agents in Australia’s migrant Holding Centres’, *The History of the Family*, Volume 22, Number 4, 2017, pp. 554-74.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2017.1302891>

6. Agutter, K., 'Fated to Be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children', *Children Australia*, Volume 41, Number 3, 2016, pp 224-31.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2016.15>
7. Agutter, K. and Ankeny, Rachel A. 'Food and the challenge to identity for post-war refugee women in Australia', *The History of the Family*, Volume 22, Number 4, 2017, pp 531-53.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2017.1314221>

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

The remainder of this introductory section considers the methodology utilised and places this work in the context of previous research and scholarship related to Australia's post-war immigration policy and the establishment and operation of migrant accommodation centres. It also addresses the contribution that this work makes in re-interpreting some aspects of the policy and operation of migrant centres in light of the extensive use of archival material, some of which has remained unobserved since ascension to the archives.

Section 2 presents background material to provide the reader with an understanding of the nature of post-war migration to Australia, the origins of, and reasons for, the policy of assimilation and the reasons for the establishment of government operated migrant Reception and Training Centres which subsequently developed into a much more extensive system of longer term migrant accommodation facilities. Chapter 3 of this section provides the

historical background of migration policy and practice while Chapter 4 charts the development of the migrant accommodation system.

Section 3 charts the way in which assimilation policy operated within migrant accommodation centres, evidencing the argument that the centre represented a special liminal space which facilitated the education of newly arrived migrants in Australian language, culture and values as well as providing opportunity through the utilisation of community groups and volunteers to allow the public to become more comfortable with the notion of non-English speaking migrants. Chapter 5 provides insight into the extent of work that went into developing large scale education programs to teach English and Australian civics to new migrants, commencing with lessons on their journey to Australia, continuing through their time in centres and then on-going support into their transition into the broader community. The article in sub-section 5.6, on assimilation through play, considers how play was used as a means of introducing newly arrived young children to the English language and the Australian way of life. The article outlines how play centres moved from hastily established, overcrowded child-minding centres, often run by untrained staff, in the late 1940s to well-organised, supervised play centres in the 1950s with a clear assimilationist agenda. Chapter 6 discusses how important volunteers and community groups were in carrying forward the assimilation agenda in the absence of adequate government funding to support separate government programs.

The remaining chapters in this section comprise a series of published and unpublished manuscripts which consider, through different 'cultural' lenses,

how the migrant centre space facilitated or inhibited assimilation. The article in Chapter 7, on sport in the centres, examines the role that physical recreation and the integration with the local community played in the assimilation of migrants while the article in Chapter 8, on the film entertainment provided in centres, identifies the deliberate process that occurred in selection of films to be screened and the clear didactic intent behind that process. Finally, the article in Chapter 9 discusses how authorities took advantage of the cultural bridging opportunities offered by the national narratives associated with large-scale ceremonial events to advance the assimilation agenda, especially within the context of the controls that they were able to exert over the population of the migrant centres.

Having established some of the ways in which the migrant accommodation system facilitated the advancement of assimilation policy, Section 4 addresses some problems in application of the policy and some negative consequences of the way in which it was applied. The article in Chapter 10 considers the particular case of single and unsupported mothers and the difficulties they posed for the authorities in implementing policy and the degree to which this cohort represented a “system failure”. The article in Chapter 11 then considers the consequential effect on the children of this cohort, many of whom were placed either temporarily or permanently in institutions or for adoption. Finally, the article in Chapter 12 revisits the oft-discussed issue of the food served in centres, providing a deeper analysis than the usual survey of complaints from ex-residents to consider how the way in which food was prepared and served

impacted on the self-identity of some migrant women and hence their ability and willingness to assimilate into Australian society

Section 5 then provides the overall conclusions from the research undertaken noting the renewed relevance of the discussion on assimilation in today's political climate.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis is based principally upon archival research and primary source analysis of official documents held in the National Archives of Australia. This project began as part of the Australian Research Council Linkage grant [LP120100553] 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants' which aimed to examine the post-World War Two migrant hostels in South Australia. However, given the national scope of the accommodation scheme, and the Commonwealth Department of Immigration objective towards the assimilation of all non-English speaking new arrivals it was necessary to extend the archival research and therefore hundreds of files, across multiple offices were examined.

Although the use of government generated archival material is often seen as a potential problem given the one sided nature of its content, this was not an obstacle here as the main research question being asked is how did the use of government funded accommodation centres aid the official policy of the assimilation of refugees and non-British assisted migrants in the period 1947-1960. Rather the key issue with the analysis of these sources was the sheer

volume of material which needed to be examined, across a broad range of subject fields to assess the application of the policy of assimilation within the centres. The papers in Chapters 7 through 12 are indicative of the breadth of research undertaken.

The DOI archival material is also supported by archival documents from other State and Commonwealth departments and from relevant organisations including the Red Cross Archives, Toc H Archives, and Girl Guide Archives, in order to give context to the application of the policy on the ground and to assess how the DOI looked to such organisations to assist in their aims. This material is key to the second research question posed in this thesis, that the assimilation of new arrivals was recognised as a two-way process which involved both the migrant and the Australian public especially through the religious and voluntary organisations that worked in the centres. This context was also aided by the examination of contemporary newspaper articles and articles from official periodicals such as the Commonwealth Office of Education.

Finally it is important to acknowledge the role of information collected as part of the wider Hostel Stories Project. This consisted of over 600 written expressions of interest and over 90 interviews which were conducted with refugees and assisted migrants who resided in the South Australian centres over the period 1948 to the mid-1980s.⁶ Although these interviews aided in my general understanding of the centres, and in particular the day to day life of the residents, they have not contributed directly to the research questions being

⁶ These interviews are currently held by the Project at the University of Adelaide but will be deposited in the South Australian State Library at the conclusion of the project.

examined here. The reasons for this are multi-faceted. Primarily the interview questions asked were aimed at learning about day to day life in the centres, the lived experience. Although the questions enquired about organisations who visited the centres and about the activities conducted therein, interviewees, either through lack of memory or a reluctance to acknowledge assistance offered, generally responded in vague terms or denied such activity.⁷ The participant's lack of acknowledgement of the role the centres played in the application of the policy of assimilation also speaks to the hypothesis presented in this thesis, that is, the subtle nature in which the activities they participated in, sometimes on a daily basis, were utilised by the Australian officials in the Australianisation of new arrivals.

⁷ Interviewees often spoke after the recording had ended of specific Pastors or Ministers who had aided them having insisted on record that they were left with no help or support. Others spoke vaguely of an awareness of the Good Neighbour Council or other organisations but could not provide specific information about their activities.

Chapter 2 Literature Overview

Due to the structure of this thesis, the number of different topic areas, and the inclusion of separately published articles, this literature overview is confined to situating the thesis into the overall body of work related to Australia post-World War Two mass migration scheme, the assimilation policy extant at the time and the implementation of the migrant accommodation system. Each included article or topic then contains a review of literature relevant to that particular topic. This structure has been adopted to minimise needless repetition of review.

The existing literature on Australia's post-World War Two mass migration scheme is considerable, and continues to expand. Scholars have primarily concentrated on the shifting of policy, from the maintenance of a xenophobic mono-cultural society, to the welcoming of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants including from the southern and eastern areas of Europe, previously considered source nations of the least desirable of immigrants.⁸

In line with this transformation of Australian society, consideration has also been given to the man, described by Eric Richards as the architect of this immigration revolution, Australia's first Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell.⁹ Scholars including Jerzy Zubrzycki, Gwenda Tavan and James Franklin are among those who have attempted to understand the sometimes

⁸ These works include longitudinal studies of Australian immigration such as Jupp, J., *Immigration*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, 1998. Sherington, G., *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1988*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980.

⁹ Richards, E., *Destination Australia*, pp 175-76.

seemingly contradictory motivations and actions of Arthur Calwell, who Zubrzycki claims was alone in his

vision, determination, purpose and compassion to set in motion an immigration program [which would] ... quantitative[ly] and qualitative[ly] transformation ... the whole nation, while maintaining the White Australia concept widely subscribed to by Australians of that period.¹⁰

As this thesis will argue, a large part of Australian's acceptance of this change in the origins of arrivals was the assurance that they would assimilate into the assumed Australian way of life, a key principal of Calwell's program.

The first to arrive, and the first to be subjected to the policy of assimilation, were the Displaced Persons from war-torn Europe and Egon Kunz's 1988 ground breaking study *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians* was, and remains, a seminal text.¹¹ Kunz, himself a DP, used samples, surveys and statistics generated from his own questionnaires, other researchers and government agencies. As a consequence, there is perhaps a concentration on detailing what might be considered the more measurable aspects of these refugees including the demographic compositions of the leading groups. That said, Kunz succeeds in highlighting the fact that these refugees were far from

¹⁰ Zubrzycki, J., "Arthur Calwell and the Origin of Post-War Immigration " in *Migration Division Seminar, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs* (Canberra: Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, 1995). Franklin, J., 'Calwell, Catholicism and the Origins of Multicultural Australia' in proceedings of *Catholics in Australian Public Life since 1788*, Australian Catholic Historical Society, Strathfield New South Wales, 2009. Tavan, G., 'Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the post-war immigration program' in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 58, Number 2, 2012.

¹¹ Kunz, E.F., *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*, Australian National University Press, Sydney, 1988.

the homogenous group Australia implied by its collective terminology and that ‘behind the achievement [of the scheme] lay dark shadows’.¹² In recent years more specific work on the origins of DPs, their careful selection and their individual experiences in Australia has been conducted by scholars, including Jayne Persian and Alexandra Delliios.¹³ Of particular note is Sestokas’ excellent work on the DPs in the North Camp for migrant workers in Yallorn, Victoria in which he concludes that Australia’s post-war immigration history, ‘on which so much commentary and debate turns, is built on sand instead of rock’.¹⁴ This thesis will build on these individual and collective experiences particularly in relation to the application of the policy of assimilation upon DPs and early post-war assisted European migrants.

In line with the emphasis of this thesis on the policy of assimilation and the role of the migrant accommodation centres in its application, the following two subsections concentrate on the literature pertaining to these specific areas.

2.1 Literature Pertaining to Assimilation

In her second maiden speech to the Senate in 2016, the newly re-elected Pauline Hanson returned to the themes of her previous term. On Australia’s earlier migrants Hanson stated: ‘Most have assimilated and are proud to call themselves Australians, accepting our culture, beliefs and laws ... As they

¹² Kunz, E.F., *Displaced Persons*, p 256.

¹³ Persian, J., ‘Chifley liked them blond’: DP Immigrants for Australia’ in *History Australia*, Volume 12, Number 2, 2015. Delliios, A., ‘Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia’ in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 40, Number 4, 2016.

¹⁴ Sestokas, J., *Welcome to Little Europe: Displaced Persons and the North Camp*, Little Chicken Publishing Co., Sale, Victoria, 2010, n.p.

integrate and assimilate, the disruption caused by diversity diminishes'.¹⁵ Hanson's implicit criticism of those who fail to assimilate, to learn English and accept the Australian way of life is regularly mirrored in public discourse, in media reports on local and national events, and in media editorials. This discourse has resonated with the Australian public to the extent that in April 2017, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and the Federal Government announced 'sweeping changes to the nation's citizenship laws ... declaring that new arrivals must prize "Australian values" and prove their commitment to the nation'.¹⁶ Migrants wishing to apply for citizenship will henceforth be required to pass a more stringent English language test and must be able to demonstrate that they have integrated into Australian society and respect Australian values.

Anna Haebich has argued that this 'nostalgia for an assimilated nation haunts public debate on national identity and nationhood, as well as related issues of race, ethnicity, indigenous rights and immigration'.¹⁷ She calls this contradiction between official policy and the celebration of multiculturalism, and the allegiance to the tenets of the past, retro-assimilation.¹⁸ This, according to Haebich, is 'clever marketing', mixing the 1950s dreams of 'an assimilated nation of Australian families living the "Australian way of life"' with current ideas of nationhood'.¹⁹ Although, as she points out, 'the retro past never really

¹⁵ Hanson, P., *Maiden Speech*, House of Representatives, Accessed 6 March 2016, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-15/pauline-hanson-maiden-speech-2016/7847136>.

¹⁶ Dziedzic, S. & Belot, H., *Australian citizenship law changes mean migrants will face tougher tests*, Accessed 20 April 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-20/migrants-to-face-tougher-tests-for-australian-citizenship/8456392>.

¹⁷ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Autumn, 2007, p 162.

¹⁸ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation', p 162.

¹⁹ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation', p 162.

happened', the marketing of it was all encompassing and '[m]ost of the campaign was directed at convincing Australian audiences'.²⁰

The idea that the 1950s policy of assimilation was a marketing tool directed at the Australian public has recently been expanded upon by Andrew Markus and Margaret Taft in their revisionist work *Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation*.²¹ Markus and Taft contend that the policy of assimilation was central to the government publicity campaign to sell immigration to the Australian public.²² While some scholars have recognised the disconnect between the ideology and the practice of the policy, most have sustained the long standing argument that migrants were expected to cast off their past culture and rapidly adopt the poorly defined Australian way of life.²³ Markus and Taft argue that this acceptance of the rhetoric of assimilation has failed to consider how the policy was actually enacted, and the complex contested understanding of what assimilation meant that was challenged from the outset of the mass migration program. The ongoing acceptance of the historical rhetoric of assimilation as the defining migrant experience in the post-war period is also questioned by Kristy Kokegei who, through a case study of German migrants, concludes that the policy of assimilation was far more nuanced than has been previously accepted.

Haebich, Markus, Taft and Kokegei all question and re-examine an established rhetoric at a time when ideals of a distinctive Australian character and way of

²⁰ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation', p 162 & 68.

²¹ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015.

²² Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', p 236.

²³ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', p 235.

living in an assimilated or integrated society are once more at the forefront of policy and public expectation. The need to better understand assimilation as ‘a necessary benchmark’ for comprehending the origins of today’s policy of multiculturalism, and, I would argue today’s retro-assimilationist ideals, is also advocated by Mark Lopez, in his extensive exploration of the origins of multiculturalism in Australia.²⁴ As Katherine Betts argues, it is Lopez’s return to the archival material and his avoidance of ‘making judgments about the virtues (or shortcomings) of multiculturalism, and of the assimilationist and integrationist policies which it eventually displaced’ that are among the key strengths of this work.²⁵ A return to contemporary sources to better understand the development and application of the policy is also the approach taken in this thesis.

Similarly, in situating the assimilationist years within the culture of 1950s Australia, John Murphy argues that the placement of this policy within a continuum of the ‘older racist “tradition” that had inspired White Australia’ fails to account for the ‘more complicated transition in which ideas of difference based on race and blood were being replaced by difference based on ‘way of life’ and cultural values’. Looking through today’s multicultural lens, the policy of assimilation might be considered ‘offensive and cruel’ however, as Murphy goes on to argue, at the time the policy was full of contradictions;²⁶

²⁴ Lopez, M., *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2000, p 46.

²⁵ Betts, K., 'Review of Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*' in *People and Place*, Volume 8, Number 3, 2000, p 85.

²⁶ Murphy, J., *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000, p 8 & 153.

contradictions which perhaps contributed to the critical responses to the policy which began to emerge in the early 1950s.²⁷

Certainly, in considering the literature of this period there is evidence of contrary views. In 1951, Kajika Milanov, himself a DP, argued that assimilation was not something that happened naturally over time but, rather, required a logically planned policy. He noted that, given the large number of unassimilated people who he described as 'a foreign body inside the Australian national organism', a directed policy which saw the minority adjust itself to the majority was essential.²⁸ In contrast, psychiatrist H.B.M. Murphy's study on DPs in Australia was less enthusiastic about Australia's policy of assimilation. Although the expectation of assimilation was a global aim amongst immigrant nations, Murphy argued that Australia's policy was unique in that it was 'geared to high speed assimilation'.²⁹ This expectation of rapid assimilation, Murphy stated, occasioned real danger for the new arrivals and placed great strain on them, increasing the risk of mental illness.³⁰ In response to Murphy, economist R.V. Horn, himself a pre-war migrant, questioned the ambiguity of the goal, both in terms of the lack of a clear definition of the Australian way of life, and in the disagreements about the time frames in which it was to be achieved. Horn noted that expectations ranged from instant assimilation, to a process which takes years or even generations³¹ and it was actually this conflict in expectations

²⁷ Lopez, M., *The Origins of Multiculturalism*, p 3.

²⁸ Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, p 72.

²⁹ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 1, 1952, p 46.

³⁰ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person', pp 47-49.

³¹ Horn, R.V., 'The Meaning Of Assimilation' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 4, 1952, pp 63-64.

that added to the pressures placed on migrants forced to live and work in unfamiliar conditions.

Other scholars who influenced the interpretation of assimilationist policy and beliefs in the 1950s, and beyond, included demographer W.D. Borrie. Borrie, Professor of Demography at the Australian National University (ANU), was a firm believer in assimilation and a chief advisor to the Department of Immigration (DOI).³² Putting aside British migrants who he believed would ‘intermingle without too much friction’, Borrie saw assimilation as a merging of migrants and the local population in a slow process that would not be achieved in a single generation. His vision of assimilation was somewhat more relaxed than many others in that he did not see the retention of own language as a bar to assimilation and, in keeping with the premise of this thesis, he also argued that assimilation did not operate in only one direction but was in fact a two-way process involving both the host population and the migrant.³³ By 1959, Borrie was also recognising the importance of a strong economy and full employment in the attenuation of cultural difference along with the significant role education, mixing and interaction, and film (all under discussion in this thesis) had on the assimilation of new arrivals and their acceptance by the wider population.³⁴ Borrie’s concept of slow acculturation, with the initial retention of old world

³² Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post-War Migrant Experience*, Penguin Australia, Ringwood, Victoria, 1984, p 21.

³³ Borrie, W.D., 'New and Old Australians' in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.) *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 173-75.

³⁴ Borrie, W.D., 'Concepts and Practices' in Borrie, W.D. (ed.) *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, UNESCO, Paris, 1959, pp 40-43.

language and structures, was subsequently further developed at the ANU by Polish born sociologist Jerzy Zubrzycki.³⁵

Like Borrie, Taft's views on assimilation developed over time. In 1953, he described assimilation as literally a 'process of becoming alike' but noted that in practice the term often implied a positive evaluation of the majority group and a negative evaluation of the minority group.³⁶ According to this perspective, Taft argued that 'assimilation was conceived as a "swallowing up" of the minority group so that it lost all identity by taking over the standards and values of the majority'.³⁷ By 1965, as assimilation had given way to the policy of integration, Taft's definition had drawn more in line with that of Borrie in that he described assimilation as a two-way process 'whereby the immigrants and the native population become more alike as a result of interaction'.³⁸ Mark Lopez also recognises the evolution in thinking about assimilation that occurred over time arguing that as the 1950s progressed a critical response to assimilationism emerged, and a subsequent 'anti-assimilationism' movement grew that, in official terms would see the adoption of the alternate policy of

³⁵ See for example Zubrzycki, J., *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley: A sociological study of immigrants in the brown coal industry in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1964. Interestingly Zubrzycki's work predates that of Robert Harney and John Zucchi who were instrumental in examining how old world traditions acted as a bridge to acculturation. See for example Harney, R.F., 'Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods' in Harney, R.F. (ed.) *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945*, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, 1985. Zucchi, J., *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity 1875-1935*, McGill-Queens University Press, Canada, 1988.

³⁶ Taft, R., 'The Shared Frame of Reference Concept Applied to the Assimilation of Immigrants' in *Human Relations*, Volume 6, 1953, p 45.

³⁷ Taft, R., 'The Shared Frame of Reference Concept', p 45.

³⁸ Taft, R., *From Stranger to Citizen: A Survey of Studies of Immigrant Assimilation in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands Western Australia, 1965, p 4.

integration. In turn, during the late 1960s this developed into what he terms “proto-multiculturalism”.³⁹

The 1960s, perhaps in response to this growing anti-assimilationism, saw the rise of a new generation of social scientist including James Jupp and Jean Martin. Although Jupp has continued to contribute to Australia’s knowledge of immigration, it is his 1966 work, *Arrivals and Departures*, which aimed to address what he saw as the lack of scholarly interest on the mass post-War migration that is of most interest in the context of this thesis. Jupp argued that, in the early post-war period, Australia believed that quick assimilation ‘was both desirable and possible’ and could be achieved through ‘organising migrants into friendly relationships with church and welfare societies’.⁴⁰ However, he was personally scathing of this demand of assimilation and the fact that, even as late as 1965, the Citizenship Convention remained dominated by the emphasis on naturalisation as the ‘sealing act of assimilation’.⁴¹ Looking back, through the lens of integration and with the benefit of almost 20 years of post-war settlement *Arrivals and Departures*’ strength lies in its ability to consider the effects of the policy of assimilation on specific ethnic groups and how the migrant’s background and experiences in turn influenced the impact of the policy. Jupp’s ultimate conclusion was that “[o]rganised assimilation” has failed because it is impossible’.⁴²

³⁹ Lopez, M., *The Origins of Multiculturalism*, p 2.

⁴⁰ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 147.

⁴¹ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 145.

⁴² Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 150.

One of the most important scholars of post-war immigration and assimilation was sociologist Jean Martin. Described by Joy Damousi as '[o]ne of the most perceptive theorists and commentators on the migration policy',⁴³ Martin's work on DPs considers the wider global situation and the homogenisation of these people into a single "minority" group by Australians and yet personalises the assimilation experience.⁴⁴ Working on the Post-war Immigration Project with Borrie and other leading scholars⁴⁵, Martin built on Jupp's *Arrivals and Departures*, which she stated 'crystallises the state of knowledge at that point of transition and so forms a bench mark against which subsequent changes can be assessed'.⁴⁶ She examined how different groups responded to the assimilation expectations placed upon them. Like her colleague Charles Price,⁴⁷ Martin argued that assimilation was different for different people. In fact, migrant assimilation was influenced by the new arrivals' background, by the circumstances and manner of migration, and by the conditions that prevailed in Australia. She argued that 'one needs to study the context in which immigrant adaptation takes place as thoroughly as one studies the immigrants themselves'.⁴⁸

⁴³ Damousi, J., *Memory and Migration in the Shadow of War Australia's Greek Immigrants after World War II and the Greek Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2015, p 68.

⁴⁴ Note Martin's thesis is under her maiden name Craig. Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants: A study in role assumption and fulfilment*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1954. For later works see for example Martin, J.I., *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965. Martin, J.I., *Community and Identity: Refugee Groups in Adelaide*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1972. Martin, J.I., *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978.

⁴⁵ This project examined the economic and social effects of the post-war immigration scheme. For further description see Beilharz, P., Hogan, T. et al., *The Martin Presence: Jean Martin and the making of the social sciences in Australia*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2015. or Stuart, M., *The Poor Relation*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic, 2010.

⁴⁶ Martin, J.I., *The Migrant Presence*, p 27.

⁴⁷ Price, C., 'Immigrants' in Davies, A.F. & Encel, S. (eds.) *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970.

⁴⁸ Martin, J.I., *Refugee Settlers*, p 101.

Context was also important to Markus and Taft in their consideration of the resources available to implement assimilation policy and their allocation.⁴⁹ They argue that while initiatives such as the establishment of a Social Welfare Section are evidence of ‘the thinking within government about the processes of control and education required to meet the objectives of assimilation’ the financial allocation to assimilation activities was extremely limited.⁵⁰ For Markus and Taft, the process of assimilation was left to ‘poorly briefed, poorly resourced and understaffed government agencies aided by a voluntary system run by amateurs’⁵¹, a position examined in this thesis in consideration of how policy played out in the context of the migrant accommodation system. I contend that authorities looked to subtle and opportunist means of educating new arrivals into the Australian way of life and at the same time, conditioning the wider public.

2.2 *Literature Pertaining to the Hostel System*

Despite the importance and wide-reaching impact of the post-War immigration scheme, the existing literature on the migrant accommodation centres, which housed refugee and assisted arrivals, is somewhat fragmented and, generally, information about migrants and accommodation centre experiences must be extracted from a number of different sources.⁵² These range from broad survey

⁴⁹ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', pp 241-43.

⁵⁰ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', p 243 & 46.

⁵¹ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', p 250.

⁵² Please note that as this thesis is concerned with role these centres played in assimilation of migrants, and as it was not considered necessary for British migrants to assimilate, the literature pertaining to the British hostel experience has been excluded from this review. For information on the British experience see for example Hammerton, A.J. & Thomson, A., *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005, Young, J., 'Migration, Ethnicity and Privilege: An Exploration of Representation and

works on immigration such Richards' *Destination Australia*⁵³ or Jupp's *From White Australia to Woomera*,⁵⁴ to works focussed on particular migrant groups such as Cresciani's *Italians in Australia*⁵⁵ or Popenhagen's *Australian Lithuanians*⁵⁶, and local area histories including Susan Marsden's *History of Woodville*.⁵⁷ In all of these works the discussion of centres is necessarily brief and frequently simplified as part of much larger, longitudinal studies.

The earliest specific consideration of migrant accommodation centres is probably the previously noted H.B.M. Murphy's 1952 study on the assimilation of DPs in Australia.⁵⁸ Murphy emphasised the proposed temporary nature of accommodation centres which he described as very much like the DP camps in Europe but 'better than the worst ... and worse than the best'.⁵⁹ His key criticisms were the lack of comfort and privacy, although he noted that the DPs he interviewed saw the centres as 'affording reasonable temporary accommodation until [they] can find private rooms'.⁶⁰ For Murphy the fact that these centres existed 'in a cultural vacuum: they are not at all integrated to normal Australian life' was akin to the contemporary American belief that the old culture could be removed before being replaced by the new.⁶¹ In Chapter 4

Accountability' in *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, Volume 23, Number 1, 2010, Hassam, A., 'Hostels and Communal Feeding Are not the British Way of Life' in *Food, Culture & Society*, Volume 12, Number 3, 2009.

⁵³ Richards, E., *Destination Australia*.

⁵⁴ Jupp, J., *From White Australia to Woomera: The History of Australian Immigration*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

⁵⁵ Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

⁵⁶ Popenhagen, L., *Australian Lithuanians*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2012.

⁵⁷ Marsden, S., *A History of Woodville*, Corporation of the City of Woodville, Woodville South Australia, 1977.

⁵⁸ Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia' in *Population Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3, 1952.

⁵⁹ Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia', p 184.

⁶⁰ Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia', p 185.

⁶¹ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person', p 54.

of this thesis, which considers in some detail the establishment and evolution of the migrant accommodation centres, I consider this point in the discussion of the centre as a liminal space, a place of transition between the old and new and the opportunities this offered in terms of aiding the assimilation process.

In the afore-mentioned *Arrivals and Departures*,⁶² Jupp considers the use of migrant centres, although his primary concern is with hostels, which he generalises as '[h]idden away in swampy industrial outer suburbs, with views of the gasworks, oil refineries or power stations'.⁶³ This is somewhat at odds with O'Hanlon's study of migrant workers centres which he argues were a standard feature of urban life'⁶⁴ in the post-war period in Australian cities. Jupp's work on Australian immigration history is important and was ground breaking in its time however, as Charles Price wrote in his review of the work, '[t]his book is both exciting and infuriating. Full of acute observations ... Liberally interlaced with gross errors of fact and misinterpretation of statistics it provides a real test for the reader to sort out fact from fiction'.⁶⁵ Indeed Jupp's "collective hostel" is sometimes in contrast to those studied for this thesis.⁶⁶

Lack and Templeton's often referred to *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration Since 1945*⁶⁷ contains little on migrant accommodation centres apart from some small excerpts concerning Bonegilla,

⁶² Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*.

⁶³ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 25.

⁶⁴ O'Hanlon, S., 'Full board and lodging: Hostels for migrant workers in early postwar Melbourne' in *History Australia*, Volume 2, Number 3, 2003, p 4.

⁶⁵ Price, C., 'Review: Arrivals and Departures by James Jupp' in *The International Migration Review*, Volume 2, Number 1, 1967, p 55.

⁶⁶ The research for this thesis included a broad examination of all post-war migrant accommodation centres in Australia.

⁶⁷ Lack, J. & Templeton, J., *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration Since 1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995.

Sydney's East Hills Hostel and Wacol in Brisbane, when in fact there were almost 100 centres around Australia in the early 1950s. The concentration, on Bonegilla in particular, in the historiography is striking and based around Glenda Sluga's ground-breaking work⁶⁸ which contributed to, and set in motion, a series of studies which examined the experiences of migrants, and especially DPs at this particular Reception and Training Centre. From Pennay's multiple works⁶⁹ to more recent studies on memory and commemoration⁷⁰, in many ways Bonegilla has come to represent the "collective" migrant accommodation experience perhaps similar to Jupp's collective hostel. While Sluga's work provides an excellent physical description of Bonegilla and its workings, her claim that '[a]ll the centres blur together ... as part of the collective memory of the post-War period'⁷¹ should be challenged and in fact, Jupp has argued⁷² that Sluga's description of Bonegilla as a "place of no hope" is problematic considering that her own interviews with former residents suggest that some were actually quite happy there. It is only very recently that scholarly consideration has begun on other centres such as the Holding Centre at Benalla⁷³ and more frequently those centres which operated in the later multicultural period.⁷⁴ As O'Hanlon states, generally these stories are missing

⁶⁸ Sluga, G., *Bonegilla 'A Place of No Hope'*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1988.

⁶⁹ See for example Pennay, B., *So Much Sky: Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre 1947-1971*, Migration Heritage Centre, Albury-Wodonga, Australia, 2008.

⁷⁰ See for example Persian, J., *Displaced persons (1947-1952): Representations, memory and commemoration*, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, University of Sydney, 2011. Dellios, A., 'Commemorating migrant camps: Vernacular memories in official spaces,' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 39, Number 2, 2015.

⁷¹ Sluga, G., *Bonegilla 'A Place of No Hope'*, p 134.

⁷² Jupp, J., 'Immigration: Some recent perspectives' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 24, Number 95, 1990.

⁷³ See for example Pennay, B., 'Remembering Benalla migrant camp' in *The History of the Family*, Volume <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2016.1265573>, 2017.

⁷⁴ See for example Ching Tsz Fung, P., *A Place 'Midway' Between the Old Life and the New: A Case Study of the Migrant Hostel at Maribyrnong*, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, The Australian Centre, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, 2013.

from history and this is particularly unfortunate given that these hostels provided migrants with an 'introduction to a new city or country, and [that the] experiences there may have had profound impacts on their subsequent lives'.⁷⁵

Probably the most thorough general work on the experiences of the migrant accommodation centres in the early DP years, and one which also alludes to the liminal nature of the centres, is Catherine Panich's *Sanctuary?*⁷⁶ Panich, using primarily the voices of the migrants themselves, explores the very personal thoughts and feelings of those who arrived between 1947 and 1954. In examining the migrant accommodation centres Panich argues that these

distinct townships were relatively self-contained entities, separate from the nearby communities, yet unreliably a part of them. Being neither entirely European nor Australian in character, they represented a period of cultural transition: for the immigrants, a point of embarkation into Australian life; for Australia, the beginning of transformation into a multicultural society.⁷⁷

The ongoing argument about the nature of the migrant centre experience is evident in the debates on national identity, citizenship and assimilation. Jordens' *Redefining Australians*⁷⁸ and later work *Alien to Citizen*⁷⁹ both consider the role of the centres as evidence for Jordens' argument that, despite popular opinion to the contrary, the absorption of post-war migrants was in fact harmonious and

⁷⁵ O'Hanlon, S., 'Full board and lodging', p 12.

⁷⁶ Panich, C., *Sanctuary? Remembering Postwar Immigration*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

⁷⁷ Panich, C., *Sanctuary?*, p 111.

⁷⁸ Jordens, A.-M., *Redefining Australians Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1995.

⁷⁹ Jordens, A.-M., *Alien to Citizen: Settling Migrants in Australia, 1945-75*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1997.

heavily Commonwealth assisted. Conversely, Haebich's *Spinning the Dream*, considers the role of centres and the organisations which worked within them as part of the program of forced assimilation and argues that the 'federal government provided only minimal support for migrants during reception and resettlement'.⁸⁰

The lack of accessible published hostel literature has, especially in more recent times, led to an increasing number of individuals and groups self-publishing reminiscent-type works on specific centres around Australia. It is not unusual to read in the prefaces and forwards of such works about the planned reunions and the lack of information available in works in local libraries and local archives. Subsequent reunions, as Don Santowiak explains in *We Came With Nothing*,⁸¹ have often inspired the creation of a more permanent record where none previously existed. Similarly, studies commissioned for heritage applications often provide important information about the sites, structures and operating procedures of these centres, as well as insight into the migrant experience within them.⁸² It is also not unusual for local councils or chambers of commerce to support the publication of centre histories (see for example *Memories of Mayfield*⁸³) or for works to grow out of museum exhibitions (see for example *A Worthwhile Enterprise*⁸⁴). In South Australia, the partnership between the Migration Museum and United Trades and Labour Council, at the behest of

⁸⁰ Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2008, p 170.

⁸¹ Forward by Don Santowiak in Synan, A., *We Came With Nothing: Story of the West Sale Migrant Holding Centre*, Lookups Research, Sale, Victoria, 2002, p v.

⁸² See for example Peters, N., Bush, F. et al., *Graylands & Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres*, Centre for Western Australian History, Perth, 1996.

⁸³ Scully, A. (ed.) *Memories of Mayfield*, Mayfield Chamber of Commerce, Mayfield, 1997.

⁸⁴ Victorian Immigration Museum (ed.) *A Worthwhile Enterprise: The Migrant Hostel in Springvale*, Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 2008.

Lobethal residents (many of whom were ex-centre residents), has resulted in a wonderful collection of the experiences of migrants from the Woodside Migrant Centre in *Boat Load of Dreams*.⁸⁵

In recent years, migrant centre experiences have often been linked to emerging specialist areas such as my own work with Catherine Kevin, and that of Alexandra Dellios on unsupported migrant women,⁸⁶ and food history, which provides a particularly good example of the differences of scholarly opinion. While Cresciani's broad study *Italians in Australia*⁸⁷ references the Italians struggle at Bonegilla to adapt to the stench of food cooked in dripping and to the dominance of mutton at the meal table, recent more specific works, such as Postiglione's 'It was just horrible': the food experience of immigrants in 1950s Australia⁸⁸, considers in some detail Italian, British and Dutch migrants' food experiences. Postiglione's conclusions that the institutions were indifferent to new arrivals needs, and that food therefore proved to be a point of 'social and cultural mediation with the host society'⁸⁹ whilst supporting the conclusions of the 1980s work of Wilton and Bosworth,⁹⁰ and Sluga⁹¹ have also fuelled recent rebuttal and debate. Pennay's reply to Postiglione⁹² draws attention to the fact that the food is viewed differently by the provider than by the consumer and

⁸⁵ Murphy, C. (ed.) *Boat Load of Dreams: Journeys by European Immigrant Workers 1947-1994*, United Trades and Labour Council, Adelaide, 1994.

⁸⁶ See Section 4 of this thesis. Also the work of Alexandra Dellios, 'It was just you and your child': single migrant mothers, generational storytelling, and Australia's migrant heritage', article currently under review (cited with permission of the author).

⁸⁷ Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*.

⁸⁸ Postiglione, N., 'It was just horrible': the food experience of immigrants in 1950s Australia' in *History Australia*, Volume 7, Number 1, 21 March 2012, 2010.

⁸⁹ Postiglione, N., 'It was just horrible', p 9.1.

⁹⁰ Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia*. Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia*.

⁹¹ Sluga, G., *Bonegilla 'A Place of No Hope'*.

⁹² Pennay, B., 'But no one can say he was hungry' Memories and representations of Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre' in *History Australia*, Volume 9, Number 1, 2012.

asks that the positive as well as the harsh memories be examined and considered. This variation of opinion on food is also highlighted in the collections of migrant voices. Comments such as 'It was much better than we had in Europe during the war'; 'It wasn't too bad'; 'We were well fed'; 'I couldn't eat it at all' led Panich to conclude that those migrants 'who had starved during the war welcomed what the camp had to offer'.⁹³ This debate on food is relevant to, and indicative of, alternative accounts of migrant experiences within the hostels where ethnic origin and expectation influence the migrant experience. Chapter 12 of this thesis addresses the issue of food in the hostels from a slightly different perspective in considering the way in which food was prepared and served impacted on the role identity of migrant women.

Finally, there is an overwhelming negativity in much of the existing literature, from Sluga's Bonegilla as a 'place of no hope'⁹⁴ and Appleyard's 'squalid ghettos'⁹⁵ to Haebich's use of adjectives such as "notorious"⁹⁶ and Richards' description of the conditions as "primitive".⁹⁷ While there is no doubting the appalling conditions some migrants endured, we must ask whether the picture is in fact completely negative. Is Bonegilla really, as Wills argues, part of a 'trajectory of migrant pain and shame'?⁹⁸ Certainly Pennay argues against this 'genre of heritage noir',⁹⁹ against the emphasis on 'new arrival discomfort ...

⁹³ Panich, C., *Sanctuary?*, p 81.

⁹⁴ Sluga, G., *Bonegilla 'A Place of No Hope'*.

⁹⁵ Appleyard, R.T., *The Ten Pound Immigrants*, Boxtree, London, 1988, p 70.

⁹⁶ Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream*, p 17.

⁹⁷ Richards, E., *Destination Australia*, p 227.

⁹⁸ Wills, S., 'Between the Hostel and the Detention Centre: Possible Trajectories of Migrant Pain and Shame in Australia' in Logan, W. & Reeves, K. (eds.) *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'difficult heritage'*, Routledge, London, 2009.

⁹⁹ Pennay, B., "But no one can say he was hungry", p 48.

[that does] not always tally with the evidence'¹⁰⁰ and against the notion that this is 'one of our sorrowful pasts ... [that sits] beside shameful stories that provoked the Apology to the Stolen Generations, the Apology to Forgotten Australians'.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Sestokas comments on the 'near total absence of bitterness or recrimination, or any hint that DPs are owed an apology or compensation as has been the case with the Stolen Generation or the group of people recently dubbed "forgotten Australians"'.¹⁰² Is there, as Richards ultimately concedes of Bonegilla, another narrative that argues there were a range of hostel experiences from 'multi-cultural icon to concentration camp'?¹⁰³ The various embedded articles in Section 3 and Section 4 of this thesis certainly argue for an alternative narrative.

¹⁰⁰ Pennay, B., "But no one can say he was hungry", p 43.

¹⁰¹ Pennay, B., "But no one can say he was hungry", p 47.

¹⁰² Sestokas, J., *Welcome to Little Europe*, p 201.

¹⁰³ Richards, E., *Destination Australia*, p 228.

Section 2 : Migration Policy, Assimilation and the Context of the Migrant Accommodation System



**Figure 2: Woodside Centre, circa 1950, Stanisława and Szczepan Pindral, Polish Displaced
Persons**

(Migration Museum photographic collection, PN03977. Courtesy Krystyna Pindral)

Chapter 3 *Migration Policy and Assimilation*

3.1 *Migration Policy Background*

By 1960, migration had added 1.2 million people to the population of Australia and more than half of these new arrivals were not of British origin. This marked an enormous shift from Australia's previous immigration policy whereby the vast majority had been British and where many of those now encouraged to settle, had previously been unwelcome.¹⁰⁴ The key motivations for this shift (the perceived need for a larger population primarily for reasons of future defence and for the growth of the nation and the economy), and how the mass migration scheme was achieved (through the arrival of DPs and then assisted passage migrants) in this period are well documented by other scholars¹⁰⁵, and are included as introductory/explanatory material in the articles that support this thesis. See especially the section 'Background to Australia's post-World War Two immigration boom' in the article in Chapter 11, the section 'Background: Refugees in Australia's post-war migration program' in Chapter 10 and the section 'Post-World War Two Australia' in Chapter 12.

3.2 *Basis of Assimilation*

The first New Australians, as Cell argues, 'entered a country whose history had been dominated by isolation' and was one of 'the most homogenous societies in

¹⁰⁴ This is particularly true for example of Italians who, throughout Australia's pre-war history, had generally been considered undesirable immigrants. See for example Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*. Agutter, K., 'Allied Captives! Italian Immigrants in World War I Australia' in *Australian Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Aside from works already noted see also for example Sherington, G., *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1988*. Appleyard, R.T., 'Immigration and National Development' in Roberts, H. (ed.) *Australia's Immigration Policy*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands West Australia, 1972. Jupp, J. (ed.) *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and their Origins*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Australia, 2001.

the world'.¹⁰⁶ Expanding on this state of isolation Helen Heney, welfare officer with United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), stated that it had resulted in an Australian population which had not 'kept pace with new world conditions'. Therefore, she argued, Australians had to learn to be tolerant to cast aside the previous resentment and intolerance of non-English migrant groups.¹⁰⁷ This stance was also held by anthropologist Caroline Kelly, an advocate for the need to condition the Australian public, who argued that the arrival of non-English migrants was a 'glorious opportunity for Australia to rid itself of many of its old hates and prejudices...wipe out all bigotry and intolerance, which has so spoiled our social life in the past'.¹⁰⁸ Certainly contemporary media coverage expresses this intolerance, particularly in regard to the potential for the formation of ghettos¹⁰⁹ and the lowering of Australian conditions. As the Federated Iron Workers Association argued:

We don't want national minority settlements in this country. We desire to see all people enter into Australian life according to Australian customs ... not to be segregated in colonies or ghettos ... We don't want a great flood of migrants ... that unscrupulous employers are able to use ... to break down Australian standards.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ 97 percent Anglo-British. Cell, J.W., 'The New Australians' in Preston, R. (ed.) *Contemporary Australia: Studies in History, Politics, and Economics*, Duke University Press, Durham USA, 1969, p 227.

¹⁰⁷ Heney, H., 'The Fruits of Isolation' in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, p 35.

¹⁰⁸ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Canberra, 1950, p 13.

¹⁰⁹ The fear of ghetto formation in the 1890s and early decades of the 1900s was acute and regularly publicised and this fear continued into the 1940s and 50s. See for example National Archives Australia: SP369/3, VOLUME 8/2; Nation's Forum of the Air - 'What do we mean by assimilation of Migrants?' [Topical debate] [Box 7]. *The Sun*, Sydney, 30 September 1936, '£70 talks if you have no English', p 3. See also my article in Appendix 1.

¹¹⁰ *The Newcastle Sun*, Newcastle, NSW, 9 July 1945, 'Federated Iron Workers Association of Australia', p 5.

Nowhere was this intolerance more evident than in the media coverage of the arrival of the *Misir* in April 1947. Although not the first post-war migrant ship to arrive,¹¹¹ the *Misir*, which carried people from over 25 nations, created a media backlash. Newsreel coverage in particular, focused on the “darker” arrivals of peasant stock, apparently given preference over suitable British, American and Nordic types. Calwell, forced to defend his welcome of these “unsuitable” migrants and refugees, had learnt a valuable lesson about the need to prepare the Australian media and public.¹¹²

Central to the success of the post-war mass migration scheme therefore, was the “conditioning” of the Australian people, who needed to be assured that the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants would not impact upon their Australian way of life.¹¹³ The public were assured that migrants would be carefully selected, that their employment would be directed, they would be encouraged to join unions, they would (through the provision of accommodation) not compete with Australians for scarce housing and resources etcetera. However, it was the promise that new arrivals would assimilate into Australian life, and ultimately become new and valuable citizens, that was key

¹¹¹ Media coverage of, and protest against earlier migrant ship arrivals was particularly focused on the number of Jewish refugees. In the case of the *Misir* the condemnation was broader and the newsreel footage and vitriolic commentary, which ran parallel to Calwell greeting these new arrivals in person, was shown in cinemas across Australia. This footage is available in *Immigration Nation Part 2*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJA-LDRPoIc>, at 11 minutes 50 seconds. For discussion of earlier arrivals, including the *Strathmore* in October 1946 and the *Hwa Lien* in January 1947, see Neumann, K., *Across the Seas: Australia's Response to Refugees – a History*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2015, chapter 2 especially pages 88-97.

¹¹² There are a number of reports on the *Misir* and Calwell's defence in parliament see for example *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 23 April 1947, 'Suitable as migrants', p 6.

¹¹³ The word “Conditioning” was used in the 1946 Haylen Report see Lack, J. & Templeton, J., *Bold Experiment*, pp 21-23. The term would continue to be used in official documents see National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330; Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio, for example Haylen to Calwell, 23 February, 1948. For more on the Australian Way of Life see discussion in Chapter 9 article ‘Her Majesty's Newest Subjects’

to the conditioning of the wider population. The policy of assimilation was a policy of reassurance.¹¹⁴

Assimilation, which was in fact a global and not solely Australian expectation, is a slippery concept to define. As noted in the literature review contemporary scholars described it as the process of ‘immigrants and the local population merging together’¹¹⁵, or a ‘process of becoming alike’.¹¹⁶ Although the DOI established a specific Assimilation Division to oversee the implementation of the policy, the general belief of the Department was that the assimilation of newcomers depended upon a correct attitude of mind on the part of both the migrant and the Australian - it was ‘a two-way process, in which the migrant must be met at least half-way by the members of the receiving nation’.¹¹⁷

Thus assimilation could not be affected through government policy alone, rather it must be achieved through the work of the people themselves; through employers, trade unions, the churches, voluntary bodies and the Good Neighbour Movements specifically established to co-ordinate the assimilation of new arrivals (see Chapter 6).¹¹⁸ As Calwell himself stated ‘the assimilation and social welfare of the migrant is essentially a matter for every Australian

¹¹⁴ This idea is also suggested by Jock Collins. See Collins, J., *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, Pluto, Sydney, 1988.

¹¹⁵ Borrie, W.D., ‘New and Old Australians’, p 174.

¹¹⁶ Taft, R., ‘The Shared Frame of Reference Concept’, p 45.

¹¹⁷ Heyes, T.H.E., ‘Australia’s ‘Stimulating Adventure’ in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, p 22.

¹¹⁸ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 10. For more information on the Good Neighbour Movement see for example Wills, S., ‘When Good Neighbours Become Good Friends: The Australian Embrace of its Millionth Migrant’ in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 36, Number 124, 2004.

citizen'.¹¹⁹ Central to the selling of the policy was the establishment of annual (later bi-annual) Citizenship Conventions which brought together the various government and non-government stakeholders to discuss the issues of the day. However, the principal object of the Conventions was to secure the cooperation of the average Australian citizen by acquainting them with the Departments immigration plans and appealing for their assistance in 'ensuring the success of Australia's population-building programme'.¹²⁰ As Lopez argues, Australians were encouraged to believe that all migrants were potentially assimilable; that migrants were beneficial to the nation; that assisting in their assimilation was a patriotic duty; and that prejudice against new arrivals was ignorant and irrational.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Calwell to Senator McKenna (Minister for Health and Social Services), 7 November 1949 in National Archives Australia: A438, 1949/7/1510; Appointment of Social Workers to Department of Immigration.

¹²⁰ Australian response to UNESCO questionnaire 1952 in National Archives Australia: A1838, 862/24/1; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural assimilation of immigrants.

¹²¹ Lopez, M., *The Origins of Multiculturalism*, pp 46-49.

Chapter 4 More than Just a Roof over Their Heads: Review of the Hostel System

4.1 The Establishment and Operation of the Migrant Accommodation System

With the rapid increase in non-English speaking migrants arriving from the end of 1947, the Government decided to establish, at Commonwealth expense, a series of migrant accommodation centres. In August 1948, Prime Minister Chifley writing to the Premier of South Australia indicated the scale of the undertaking when he noted that:

with the object of accelerating and expanding production in other industries which are vital to the Australian economy, my Government has decided to undertake a programme which will involve an expenditure of £2,500,000 for the conversion of Service camps and building of hostels to accommodate 6,000 displaced persons in industrial areas ... hopeful of a large proportion of the programme being carried out during the ensuing twelve months¹²²

The priority was the development of Reception and Training (R&T) centres for the purpose of providing initial processing of, and accommodation for, new arrivals. With incoming DPs subject to a work obligation whereby all single refugees and heads of families would be required to accept allocated work for a

¹²² National Archives Australia: D618; IM4 PART 1, [Department of Immigration] - Gawler SA NA [New Australians] hostel accommodation. Of course the total expenditure for the housing of over 170,000 DPs and thousands of other assisted migrants over the duration is not known. Archival files are full of allocations of money for building, maintenance, extension and improvements to centres across the years of operation.

period of two years, collecting migrants together in R&T centres allowed for efficient delivery of alien's registration, medical examinations, social services, employment interviews, and basic English and civics instruction while the migrants were awaiting allocation to employment.¹²³ Initially, R&T Centres were placed under the control of Alien Registration Division of the DOI, but as the magnitude of the task of acquiring, equipping and operating the centres was understood, it was decided, in 1949, to establish a dedicated Migrant Accommodation Centres Division within the Department.¹²⁴ The first R&T centre was opened at Graylands in Western Australia on 22nd September 1947, closely followed by Bonegilla in Victoria on the 8th December the same year.¹²⁵

With the decision to allow the migration of family groups and unsupported mothers¹²⁶ under the DP scheme the problem arose of how to accommodate the dependents of breadwinners, and mothers with children. The solution was the introduction of Migrant Accommodation (or Holding) Centres where dependents could be housed pending the acquisition of suitable housing within the community by the breadwinner, and the placement in live in employment of unsupported mothers and their children (see article in Chapter 10). The first Holding Centre at Uranquinty in New South Wales was opened on 6th December 1948.¹²⁷ As employers were unable in many cases to provide accommodation for breadwinners, a further type of migrant accommodation,

¹²³ National Archives Australia: A12799, 3; Historical outline of Migrant Accommodation Division.

¹²⁴ B.R. Watson, Migrant Accommodation Centres Division Policy, Historical Background, 24 September, 1956 in National Archives Australia: A12799, 9; Migrant Accommodation Centre Division - Functions.

¹²⁵ B.R. Watson, Department of Immigration Statement III, Immigration Reception and Accommodation Centres, 4 May 1958 in National Archives Australia; A12799, 3.

¹²⁶ This term was used for widows with children and unmarried mothers.

¹²⁷ B.R. Watson, Department of Immigration Statement III, Immigration Reception and Accommodation Centres, 4 May 1958 in National Archives Australia; A12799, 9.

Workers Hostels were established at about the same time, under the control of the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS).¹²⁸ Due to the acute housing and materials shortages that existed in the post-war period, the early migrant accommodation centres utilised existing structures such as ex-army and air-force facilities (Bonegilla, Woodside and Mallala for example) and woolsheds (Brooklyn and Rosewater). Many of these facilities were leased by the DOI, converted to provide accommodation and services initially for DPs and then other assisted migrants (including British), and later, when no longer required, returned to their original owners.¹²⁹

Lastly, a final tier of accommodation was provided in the form of purpose built migrant hostels, although still using available prefabricated buildings in the form of Nissen and Quonset Huts, for the housing of assisted migrant families.¹³⁰ In 1952 the running of these hostels was handed over to Commonwealth Hostels Limited, a Commonwealth-owned company.

¹²⁸ B.R. Watson, Statement on Migrant Centres and Migrant Worker's Hostels, 30 November 1956 in National Archives Australia; A12799, 9. The term Worker's Hostel was actually a generic one which covered a number of different types of accommodation centres where workers were housed. For example, State instrumentalities and private employers were encouraged to provide accommodation for the migrant workers and in some cases they received assistance for this by being given priority access to, and discounted charges for, prefabricated buildings. Many workers were actually accommodated in areas of the newly built hostels so that for example at Glenelg in South Australia (opened in 1949) a separate dormitory section for male workers operated alongside of the family hostel area. The housing of "single" men alongside of families and women whose husbands were working elsewhere was sometimes problematic. Some, so called workers hostels later became general hostels and British hostels. National Archives Australia: D1917, D23/49 PART 2; Displaced persons hostel accommodation.

¹²⁹ For example each of the eight wool stores at Rosewater was leased from the Australian Wool Realization Commission for £1,200 per annum each. J.A. Campbell to Surveyor General, Department of Interior, 1 June 1949 in National Archives Australia: A879, C691; Rosewater wool stores migrant workers accommodation.

¹³⁰ Note that in the 1960s migrant flats were also established but this is outside of the period of this thesis.

The process for allocation to the various types of accommodation was as follows: all DPs and assisted European migrants were initially accommodated in an R&T centre; if a breadwinner was placed in employment which included employer provided accommodation suitable for families then the dependents were relocated with the breadwinner, otherwise they were relocated to the closest Holding Centre; and, if the breadwinner was allocated to employment with a place in a Commonwealth hostel then they would be accompanied by their family so long as the hostel was equipped for families and there was sufficient vacancy, otherwise the dependents would again be relocated to the closest Holding Centre.¹³¹ Assisted migrant families transited through an R&T centre or went directly to Commonwealth Hostels. The sites for hostels were carefully chosen so that they were situated close to potential employment. Certain standards were required and these were generally considerably higher than for other types of centres. For example all hostels had to have good transport links, with a maximum total of two hours travel time per day, and provision of water, electricity and sewerage was essential. There had to be established recreational facilities such as playing fields and cinemas, otherwise these facilities needed to be provided on site. There was an attempt to standardise each type of centre across Australia so that sleeping quarters, kitchens and dining rooms, laundries, and recreation rooms were as similar as possible.¹³²

¹³¹ B.R. Watson, Migrant Accommodation Centres Division Policy, 24 September, 1956 in National Archives Australia; A12799, 9.

¹³² Outline of Recommended Standards for Building and Equipment, no author, no date (circa 1948) in National Archives Australia: D618, IM4 PART 1; [Department of Immigration] - Gawler SA NA [New Australians] hostel accommodation.

Across the years there were constant discussions, often in response to complaints and downturns in arrivals, to improve accommodation centres. For example, at the First Annual Citizenship Convention in January 1950, the need to provide a better standard of accommodation in the migrant workers hostels was discussed although Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, noted that:

it is very much superior to the accommodation which our own citizens accepted gladly as part of the emergency of war ... and very much superior to the conditions which obtain in many of the Displaced Persons Camps of Europe ... conditions generally are such that we should not be ashamed of them ... To provide the best would mean, perhaps, that we could deal with only a handful. When we have to provide for thousands of people, however, it must be a good standard.¹³³

This balance of providing necessary accommodation for new arrivals of an adequate standard to meet their requirements and expectations, but not superior to that available to Australians, especially ex-servicemen and their families, was a constant problem for the DOI. Letters to the editors across the country complained that 'there should be no more immigrants until we are on the road to housing our own Australian community decently'.¹³⁴ Others drew links between Australian housing conditions and migrant arrivals:

¹³³ Address by the Minister for Immigration the Hon. H E. Holt to the Australian Citizenship Convention, Canberra, 24 January 1950 in National Archives Australia: D1917, D24/46 Part 2; Decentralisation - migrant hostels Part 2.

¹³⁴ *The Mercury*, Hobart, Tasmania, 21 July 1947, 'Urges Houses before Migrants', p 7.

the way some Australians have to live while the Government is bringing migrants here. Thousands are living in sheds, tents, and caravans ... look after the needy here first.¹³⁵

This was especially the case in places like Melbourne where Camp Pell was often in the news and where unions refused to allow members to work on migrant centres such as that at Williamstown while Australians lived in such conditions.¹³⁶ The “Catch 22” need for migrant workers to build houses, but themselves needing to be adequately housed was a constant dilemma for officials.

After the first week, all arrivals were expected to pay rent in all centres. The rate of rent was titrated for breadwinners, dependants and children by age. For this rent migrants received very basic accommodation, meals served cafeteria style and access to communal bathrooms, laundries and other recreational facilities (see articles in sections 3 and 4). Canteens and shops for the sale of confectionery, cool drinks, toiletries etc. were also established.¹³⁷ As kindergartens, primary schools, crèches, baby kitchens, health centres, Y huts, staff accommodation, baggage storage, garaging and so on were provided many of these centres became complete communities. Although migrants had complete freedom of movement, and in fact ongoing movement especially for work was a feature of DP life (see article in Appendix 2), the provision of these services, alongside of the centre locations, often in newly developing suburbs, industrial areas, and rural locations resulted in the risk of an unwanted physical

¹³⁵ *The News*, Adelaide, 25 June 1948, 'Houses', p 2.

¹³⁶ *The Age*, Melbourne, 2 April 1949, 'Reply to Camp Pell Housing Complaints', p 2.

¹³⁷ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/1/1; Establishment of Canteen Services at Migrant Centres. Part 1.

and psychological separation from the rest of the community which under the policy of assimilation needed to be addressed. Hence the focus on activities designed to encourage the mixing of old and New Australians, featured in the articles in Section 3, was essential.

4.2 *The Hostel as a Liminal Space*

[T]he whole migratory process is a sequence of movements that are linked to each other by periods of settlement ... in socially constructed places.¹³⁸

The physical and psychological separation of migrant accommodation centres, both real and imagined, are important in their consideration as liminal spaces.

The concept of liminality was originally formulated by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner in the late 1960s. Turner drew heavily on ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's 1909 "rites of passage" in which he outlined three specific stages namely; separation from a previous life (the "pre-liminal"), transition (the "liminal"), and reintegration (the "post-liminal").¹³⁹ From van Gennep's model Turner proposed that the first phase of separation represented 'the detachment of the individual or the group from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions'.¹⁴⁰ In the second or liminal phase the subject, Turner maintained, is neither here nor there, they are

¹³⁸ Pascual-de-Sans, A., 'Sense of Place and Migration Histories Idiotype and Idiotope' in *Area*, Volume 36, Number 4, 2004, p 350.

¹³⁹ van Gennep, A., "The Rites of Passage," Adelaide University Library (London: Routledge, 2013), n.p.

¹⁴⁰ Turner, V., *Dramas. Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1974, p 232.

ambiguous, they are 'betwixt and between'.¹⁴¹ Finally the third stage represented the person or group's re-entry or re-incorporation from the liminal back into the social structure.¹⁴²

Outside of the betwixt and between status of the liminal Turner also argued that this stage coincided with a state of "outsiderhood" when the individual or group is situated outside of the social system, set apart from the wider society.¹⁴³

Calwell said that the

decision to accommodate these migrants on arrival in a well organized reception and training centre is an entirely new departure from previous immigration plans, It is, in fact, revolutionary, and is the first experiment of its kind to be undertaken in this country.¹⁴⁴

It is my contention that the accommodation centres, thus envisioned, provided a liminal space, a space in between, a place separated from the migrant's previous life and separated from their future life within the wider community. Certainly, for Australian authorities, this liminal space of the centres provided an important place, especially in the years of assimilation, for the retraining and adjustment of migrants and refugees to life in Australia. The centres provided an ideal environment for the re-education of new arrivals. As a liminal space they allowed a place to introduce the Australian way of life, through the food that

¹⁴¹ Turner, V.W., *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine, New York, 1969, p 95.

¹⁴² Turner, V., *Dramas. Fields, and Metaphors*, p 232.

¹⁴³ Turner, V., *Dramas. Fields, and Metaphors*, p 233.

¹⁴⁴ Calwell, Minister for Immigration, Government Policy: Ministerial Statement. 28 November 1947, quoted in Kunz, E.F., *Displaced Persons*, p 39.

was served, the lessons in English and citizenship, the centre schools and pre-schools, in all of the elements and expectations of this as an institutional setting. Furthermore, these new arrivals were gathered together under the influence of the assimilationist agenda of the day. Outside, in the community, the risk of new arrivals congregating in ethnic enclaves and maintaining their old ways was much greater. The liminality of the accommodation system actually provided an opportunistic environment to advance the assimilationist agenda and directors of centres were instructed to encourage assimilation activities. In fact, centre directors, and Commonwealth Migration Officers in each state, were required to report monthly on all of the activities which they had initiated and which they considered had ‘contributed to the cause of assimilation’.¹⁴⁵

Although in this thesis the theory of liminality is used to consider how the accommodation centres provided a potential space for the Australian authorities to assimilate new arrivals, it is important to note that its effectiveness was influenced by a number of factors. For those migrants and refugees who passed quickly through the centres the time spent ‘in-between’ was certainly shortened. However, for the large numbers who stayed for months, and even years, their exposure to the assimilationist teachings was much greater and this is evident for example in Chapter 7, Article 2 ‘Sport Brings us Together’ when extended stays as a result of the coal strike allowed for increased activities within the centres and the perception of better assimilation. Longer stays also arose during periods of economic downturn such as in 1952-3.

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum from T.H.E. Heyes 9 April 1953 in National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/26; Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO. These are changed to quarterly from 1953.

Many other factors might have influenced the effectiveness of the centre as a liminal space including, for example, the reason for migration, family circumstances including separation, and country of origin. The liminality of the accommodation centre for stateless refugees was most probably different from other groups of assisted migrants who arrived looking for a better life. Similarly, there were differences between male breadwinners sent to work camps who mixed with Australian workers and their wives who spent long periods in Holding Camps and children who often moved in and out of the centres to go to school.

Increasingly, scholars are applying the theory of liminality to areas outside of its anthropological origins.¹⁴⁶ The circumstances of the migrant accommodation centres, in particular the contained and controlled nature of the environment, provide an ideal case study of the application of this theory to the field of migration studies.

¹⁴⁶ See for example Eskner, H.J. & Orellana, M.F., 'Liminality as Linguistic Process: Immigrant Youth and Experiences', in Jacqueline, K. (ed.), *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, Transcript, Verlag, 2005, pp 175-206. Sargent, C.F. & Larchanché-Kim, S., 'Liminal Lives: Immigration Status, Gender and the Construction of Identities Among Malian Migrants in Paris' in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 50, Number 1, 2006, pp 9-26. Thomassen, B., 'Revisiting Liminality: The Danger of Empty Spaces', in Andrews, H. & Roberts, L. (eds.), *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between*, Routledge, Abingdon UK, 2012, pp 21-35.

Section 3 : Implementation of Assimilation Policy within the Migrant Hostel

GL/635
Annex
April 1952

A N N E X

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENTS
FOR THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE
NATIONAL LIFE AND THEIR CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

I. What practical measures are taken by your Government or by governmental and non-governmental agencies to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the national life of your country and to promote their cultural assimilation?

In the cultural field, what measures are taken with regard to:

- (a) education of children;
- (b) educational facilities for adults, particularly language instruction;
- (c) the provision of libraries, press and radio services, and films in the language of your country and in the languages of the immigrants;
- (d) the sponsoring of cultural and sports organizations enabling immigrants to participate in cultural, literary and other social activities, in their own language or in yours, and to take part in sport;
- (e) the participation of immigrants in the general life of the community (including access to recreational facilities); and their understanding of local social habits;
- (f) assistance to immigrants in the practice of their religion, especially during the initial period of settlement in your country;
- (g) preparation of immigrants for the exercise of their civic duties, with a view to their ultimate naturalization; and facilitating and expediting naturalization.

II. Does your Government encourage and/or subsidize voluntary organizations for the purpose of carrying out practical work in connexion with the above questions? If so, please specify such organizations and their activities.

III. By what means does your Government inform public opinion and influence it towards the adoption of an attitude favourable to newcomers?

IV. Has your Government developed any particular methods, based on experience, which it has found to be of value in facilitating the integration of immigrants into the national life and in promoting their cultural assimilation? What factors would you say encourage or impede assimilation?

Figure 3: UNESCO Questionnaire

((National Archives Australia: A1838, 862/24/1))

To understand Australian assimilation policy at this time in the context of more global expectations about the treatment of migrants, it is instructive to consider the questionnaire that forms the frontispiece to this section. This questionnaire was issued by the Social Commission of the United Nations in 1952 in response to a recommendation that a study be conducted into the measures being adopted in various countries to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the national life of their new homelands. The main thrust of the questions relate to the types of services, activities and engagements that were provided by the government and other parties to facilitate the integration of migrant into the national life of the country and their cultural assimilation. In this section, and in the various chapters, I consider a subset of the services that are called out in the UN questionnaire and consider how they played out in the context of the migrant accommodation system.



Figure 4: English class at Bathurst Reception Centre NSW.

NAA: A12111, 1/1951/22/34

5.1 *Introduction*

An examination of the archival record highlights the link between English language acquisition and assimilation. At the first Citizenship Convention (January 1950), for example, it was noted that the '[c]omplete assimilation of a newcomer into the Australian community depends primarily on his ability to

speak and understand the English language'.¹⁴⁷ The expectation that post-war European migrants would learn English was an essential part of the policy of assimilation and the first step on the expected path towards the adoption of Australian citizenship.

The record also reinforces the fact that, as in other areas of the assimilation program, the Australian public was expected to play a major role and that the Australianisation of new arrivals was a two-way process. Newspaper articles called on readers to offer help and understanding, to proffer the renowned Australian tradition of "a fair go"¹⁴⁸ and the government produced leaflets and booklets which provided information on the backgrounds of the different migrant groups in an attempt to encourage two-way learning and understanding. They reminded Australians that the success of migrant education depends 'a great deal upon the co-operation goodwill of the general public [sic]'¹⁴⁹ and that '[n]o matter what facilities for education are provided by government authorities, the Australians with whom the newcomers come in contact will finally determine the degree of success of the educational scheme'.¹⁵⁰ In support of community assistance, a series of posters were designed for display in post-offices and other public areas. Although these posters were, on the surface, aimed at encouraging migrants to attend classes, they also served 'a

¹⁴⁷ 'Education in Assimilation', n.d., encl. with RC Mills to Secretary, Department of Immigration, 13 October 1949, in National Archives Australia: A445, 146/1/1; Australian Citizenship Convention 1950 General.

¹⁴⁸ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 21 May 1948, 'Out Of The Mist To A New Citizenship', p 2.

¹⁴⁹ Adult Migrant Education, 9 April 1952 in National Archives Australia: D400, SA1960/69; Assimilation Division Central Office Instructions For Information of Divisional Heads. For discussion of the booklets see also National Archives Australia: A1887, IPS/157A; Learn English Campaign "Take One" Poster.

¹⁵⁰ Department of Information for Department of Immigration, *Migration in Action*, Truth and Sportsman, Melbourne, n.d., p 17.

psychological purpose ... [the] Idea behind it was that Australians would be advised that they could help European migrants learn English and that subsequent criticism by them of migrants for not learning the language might be stifled'.¹⁵¹

Jordens and, more recently, Markus and Taft have argued that the teaching of English was the best-resourced area of the mass migration scheme as acquisition of the English language was seen to be important for workforce integration and future naturalisation.¹⁵² All migrants arriving under negotiated assisted passages were required to sign agreements which included a clause which stated:

While I remain in Australia, I will use every endeavour to learn the English language; and will regularly attend the nearest free night class made available by the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia for the purpose of providing migrants with instruction in the English language.¹⁵³

Classes began in the holding camps in Europe after acceptance for migration to Australia. They continued on board ship and then in the accommodation centres after arrival. The emphasis on learning English continued outside of the centres and language programs were available through continuation classes and through specifically designed radio lessons and correspondence courses which were, of course, also available to those who spent extended time in the accommodation

¹⁵¹ Murphy, News and Information Bureau 2 October 1952 to Secretary Department of Immigration National Archives Australia: A445, 174/7/17; Australianization Syllabus - Provision of Educational Books, Materials, Equipment.

¹⁵² Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation', p 244.

¹⁵³ Similar clauses were included in all negotiated assisted passage agreements. See for example National Archives Australia: A445, 197/1/2; Greek - Assisted Passage Agreement [102 pages].

centres. In fact, all forms of instruction were linked and cross study was encouraged.¹⁵⁴

However, despite the fact that, by 1950, over 1,200 people were employed in teaching English and Australian ways to new arrivals,¹⁵⁵ some scholars have been highly critical of the way Australia conducted language classes. In 1952, Murphy noted the lack of awareness of the cultural differences between Australians and DPs, so that in teaching them English and Australian ways, they were treated as 'a special class of Australian' which might be useful in selling the scheme to the general public; however, such an approach was not helpful to the new arrivals.¹⁵⁶ Looking back on the mass migration scheme through the 1960s' lens of integration, Jupp concluded that the teaching of English was ultimately unsuccessful partially because classes were taught by 'schoolteachers with little experience in the field'.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Wilton and Bosworth, while recognising that migrants were graded on arrival according to their ability to speak English, agreed with Jupp that the teachers were 'inexperienced in the art of teaching English as a second language'.¹⁵⁸ Ex-teachers have detailed the way in which classes were run, the lack of knowledge and experience in teaching English as a second language, and the lack of resources, with text books and worksheets written and amended as knowledge of how to teach English grew.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ For a full account see for example Carrington, L., *A Real Situation: The Story of Adult Migrant Education in Australia 1947 to 1970*, Tara, Canberra, 1997. And Commonwealth Office of Education, 'Teaching the New Australians' in *Education News*, Volume 2, Number 2, 1949.

¹⁵⁵ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 11 August 1950, '1,200 People Now Teaching Migrants', p 2.

¹⁵⁶ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person', p 57.

¹⁵⁷ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 172 & 75.

¹⁵⁸ Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia*, p 111.

¹⁵⁹ See for example Carrington, L., *A Real Situation*.

Shirley Martin in her history of the Adult Migrant Education Program states that although the teaching of English was

seen as the key factor ... somewhat naively, there was a strong assumption that very little assistance would be required. There was no real understanding or appreciation of the nature or characteristics of adult second language learning or of the time required by different categories of learners to achieve satisfactory oracy and literacy skills.¹⁶⁰

However, Panich, perhaps more pragmatically, notes that although the program was 'fraught with problems' it was the first time that English had been taught as a foreign language and the need to equip newcomers with survival English, as Kunz described it, meant that the program, by necessity, was 'practical rather than academic'.¹⁶¹

Despite these retrospective criticisms, contemporary documents indicate there was, from quite early on, recognition of the shortcomings and efforts to improve the quality of the programs. Teachers were offered professional development through specially-conducted short courses and summer schools and informed of what, at the time, was considered best practice through regular bulletins such as the Commonwealth Office of Education journal *English A New Language: A Bulletin for Teachers of New Australians in Continuation Classes* which provided up to date information on teaching English as second language from around the world as well as suggestions for exercises and lesson plans. In the

¹⁶⁰ Martin, S., *New Life New Language: The history of the Adult Migrant English Program*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney, 2002, p 5.

¹⁶¹ Panich, C., *Sanctuary?*, p 151. Kunz, E.F., *Displaced Persons*, p 141.

view of some, Australia was a leader in the introduction of mass language education at this time.¹⁶² However, learning English was, as Charles Price explained:

only part of the whole education programme which covers the total process official and unofficial of helping permanent immigrants to understand and accept the social, economic and cultural conditions in their new country.¹⁶³

English therefore, was an essential factor in assimilation, but so too was the Australianisation of new arrivals. In keeping with the main themes of this thesis, this chapter will explore how English language lessons also provided important outlets for teaching the Australian way of life, for conditioning and convincing the general public and for enlisting their help under the banner of assimilation as a two-way process.

5.2 *Pre-arrival Education*

Instruction in the Australian way of life was a fundamental element of English language instruction. This education in civics and Australian ways began, as Panich notes, in the Australian camps in Europe, where the notices and signs were in English and buildings were named after Australian cities as an initial

¹⁶² See for example discussion in National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/8/13; Migrant education - Publications - English on the Way [1.5cm]. Commonwealth Office of Education, 'Editorial' in *English A New Language: A Bulletin for Teachers of New Australians in Continuation Classes*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1950.

¹⁶³ Price, C., *Education of Immigrants for Citizenship*, Report for UNESCO in National Archives Australia; A1838, 862/24/1.

and basic introduction.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, teachers in camps and on board ship were, in addition to teaching English, instructed to:

give information to migrants concerning Australia and to answer queries from the migrants on the journey so that the migrants may know some of the important facts about the country to which they are coming.¹⁶⁵

To aid in this they were supplied with a wide selection of Australiana (novels, biographies, travel books etc.) and Australian documentary films.¹⁶⁶ Teachers were helped by specially selected DPs who, in return received time off their contract period in Australia.¹⁶⁷ The use of European language speakers to translate films as they were shown, and to facilitate discussion, was seen as a great advantage in these early stages.¹⁶⁸ The main text used was a specially prepared booklet aptly entitled *English on the Way*.¹⁶⁹ Education officer reports and copies of the supplementary pre-prepared lectures, supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Education, give insight into the content of lessons.¹⁷⁰ Instruction was given on Australia's history, geography, on daily activities such as using the post office, on popular cultural events and amusements and so on.¹⁷¹ Migrants were taught songs including the national

¹⁶⁴ Panich, C., *Sanctuary?*, p 150.

¹⁶⁵ Circular, R.C. Mills, n.d. (circa 1948) in National Archives Australia: MP275/1, 1953/1067; Migrant assimilation - English language courses.

¹⁶⁶ National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067. See also section on film in this thesis.

¹⁶⁷ National Archives Australia: MP1129/1, 53/38/359; Displaced Persons. Policy. Holding file for former DP Policy File [0.25cm].

¹⁶⁸ National Archives Australia: A437, 1949/6/274; Reports by Welfare and Information Officer, Mr L A Tepper.

¹⁶⁹ National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/8/13. This booklet would later be acquired by I.C.E.M. for use for migrants traveling to other English speaking countries.

¹⁷⁰ National Archives Australia: A437, 1948/6/377; Draft Lectures for Welfare and Information Officers on Displaced Persons ships.

¹⁷¹ National Archives Australia; A437, 1948/6/377.

anthem and “Waltzing Matilda”.¹⁷² Teachers were also instructed to disregard the migrants’ national affiliations ‘in line with the desirability of banishing national loyalties in the effort to make Australians of all the passengers’.¹⁷³ English lessons enroute were also lessons in Australian ways.

5.3 *Education in Reception and Training Centres*

After arrival, migrant accommodation centres were important liminal spaces for providing intensive learning environments and establishing a certain knowledge, especially in regard to Australian customs, before migrants entered the wider community. Archival documents indicate that the level of expectation, at least in some quarters, was more realistic than has previously been acknowledged. In November 1948 for example, R.H. Wheeler of the DOI noted the emphasis on the acquisition of English, in the short term for the work-place and in the longer term for naturalisation, but also recognised that language acquisition could be expected to take some time. As he wrote:

While in centres they are taught by experienced teachers elementary English, weights, measures, rules etc., and as far as is practicable within the time, the Australian way of life so that they will have some idea of what is expected of them when they proceed to employment. The “follow-on” system of education in the community continues this and we hope that after a period of, say, five years in the Commonwealth the great majority of aliens will have at least a

¹⁷² National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/3/3 PART 1; Migrant Education - Copies of letters written from Migrant Camps to other bodies.

¹⁷³ Donald Gravenall, Australian Education Officer, Report on the Third Voyage of M/S Skaugum, September 1949 in National Archives Australia: A437, 1949/6/230; SS SKAUGUM - Report by Ship's Information Welfare Officer.

working knowledge of our language and thus be more fitted to qualify for naturalisation.¹⁷⁴

Authorities did recognise that the lessons in the R&T and other centres were particularly important, agreeing that '[e]very additional day spent in the Reception Centres is probably worth weeks in Continuation Classes'.¹⁷⁵ At R&T centres, migrants were expected to attend classes for five hours a day from Monday to Friday and two hours on Saturdays¹⁷⁶ and each day had the opportunity to receive at least one hour in each of: instruction in language; application of that instruction through word games, reading and general discussion; the Australian way of living; and visual education by means of Australian documentary films. The first experience of teaching English was with DPs who represented many nationalities and spoke many languages. On arrival at the R&T centres, DPs were assessed and divided into three groups: those who spoke German; those who spoke Russian; and those who spoke neither. Then in each of these groups English-speaking ability was tested in order to streamline the classes.¹⁷⁷

The syllabus on Australia was an extension of the earlier introduction in Europe and on ships and covered the historical background to the country and its place in the British Empire, the Pacific and the world; the main geographical features of Australia; lessons on civics and the duties and privileges of citizenship; and

¹⁷⁴ National Archives Australia; MP1129/1, 53/38/359.

¹⁷⁵ R.C. Mills, Office of Education to Secretary Department of Labour and National Service, 23 February 1949 in National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067.

¹⁷⁶ Martin, S., *New Life New Language*.

¹⁷⁷ National Archives Australia: MP240/1, 1948/23/3295; Displaced Persons - Education of: English Language (& Civics) Classes.

lessons on Australian social customs and practical instruction on everyday necessities such as the systems of money, weights and measures.¹⁷⁸ Teachers were supplied with copies of *Australian Background: An Introduction to Social Studies* to help in the civics classes due to a lack of ‘good Australianization material’.¹⁷⁹

As indicated above, English lessons were both about language acquisition and Australianisation and these two objectives often merged as is evident in the materials supplied and in the instructions to teachers. Initially, the teaching syllabus for the Australian way of life aimed to cover three distinct areas, namely, the climate, distances, and the cost of living on the basis that the DOI believed these particular topics needed to be taught in the centres as migrants often did not expect rain, or did not understand the size and climate variations in Australia. As the first waves of migrants left the centres for work and to live in the community other topics were introduced, mainly as a consequence of complaints by Australians who came into contact with them. The inclusion of topics such as farm etiquette (shutting gates, respecting fences, etc.) and issues around manners and customs, were perhaps mostly about preparing migrants for the Australian public’s acceptance of them and the immigration scheme as a whole.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ National Archives Australia; MP240/1, 1948/23/3295.

¹⁷⁹ This 135 page book was produced by the Australian Army Education Service and had sections on Australian history, the Australian economy, and information on Australian society and politics. R.C. Mills to Secretary Department of Immigration, 2 July 1948 in National Archives Australia: A446, 1962/65900; Education in migrant centres - General part 1.

¹⁸⁰ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/21/29; Migrant Education - Teaching techniques and materials – Australianization.

Elementary reading material and lesson plans from centres such as Bathurst show how typical Australian icons were used as a background to learning vocabulary and grammar. For example a large picture of a kangaroo introduced new words and concepts about size as well as verbs such as “to walk” and “to jump” while it also supplied information about an iconic Australian animal.¹⁸¹ In a lesson on Australian manners and customs the student meets Joe and learns social behaviours and expected norms including: how Joe never takes his hat off to another man but does for a woman; how Joe does not shake hands with his friends because an ‘Australian does not shake the hand of a friend everyday’; how Joe walks on the street side of the woman he is with to protect her from the traffic, never between the women and the buildings; and how when Joe rides a tram he always lets women and children get on first, but gets out first to help women and children get down.¹⁸² Many of these same social customs were covered in *I Can Read English* which was given to all New Australians on arrival. This booklet focused on the Miller family, and their simple stories illustrated the Australian way of life including; what people did on weekends; the sports they played; how and where they shopped; and common examples of Australian social life, including how to behave at dances, concerts and “the pictures” as well as more generally in society such as when to use titles including Mr and Mrs.¹⁸³

From soon after the arrival of the first DPs, the potential benefit of books as a source of English language learning and for instruction in the Australian way of

¹⁸¹ Lesson plan October 1949 in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/29.

¹⁸² National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/29.

¹⁸³ The Commonwealth Department of Education, *I Can Read English*, FH Johnston Publishing, Sydney, 1950.

life, in particular Australian history and civics, was discussed.¹⁸⁴ By mid-1949 library services were available in all accommodation centres.¹⁸⁵ These library services were an extension of the facilities already in operation in the camps in Europe and on-board ship.

Financial statements from 1949 indicate that to date £50 had been spent on library services for the Naples camps, £2060 for ships libraries (although excess copies of these books, as the shipment of DPs declined, were often placed in accommodation centres), £710 for R&T centres and £1200 for Holding Centres, a total cost £4020.¹⁸⁶ Given that the list of books suggested by the National Library of Australia indicates that the average cost per book was 6 to 30 shillings, these sums represent a considerable supply.¹⁸⁷ At the end of 1949, an additional £500 was allocated to be spent on books for R&T centres and an additional £600 for libraries in Holding Centres where women and children were often in residence for long periods.¹⁸⁸ This length of stay resulted in the establishment of circulating libraries, rotating books across a number of centres to ‘enliven the books available’, because, as the Sturt Centre instructor explained, many migrants had exhausted the supply of books held and they were requesting more.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3; Library Services for Migrants.

¹⁸⁵ National Archives Australia; A12799, 9.

¹⁸⁶ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁸⁷ Select list of books for New Australians Compiled by the National Library Canberra, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁸⁸ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁸⁹ R.C. Mills to Secretary Department of Immigration 27 March 1952 and B.O. Atkins Instructor Stuart Centre to Director General Education Brisbane, 11 January 1952 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

The provision of library services was considered as a means of assisting the assimilation of immigrants into the Australian way of life.¹⁹⁰ Certainly as a letter from the Office of Education to the Secretary of the DOI (18 September 1949) indicates, books ‘should cover various aspects of Australian life and Australian literature’.¹⁹¹ Works were from multiple genres including fiction, biography, history, reference material and illustrated works, and reports from the Bathurst and Bonegilla Centres indicate which titles were most popular in each centre. For example, the librarian at Bathurst notes that books about Australian culture such as *The Australian Theatre* and *Australia Makes Music* were very popular and yet at Bonegilla these books ‘rarely leave the shelves’.¹⁹² The most popular books in both centres were reported to be Australian novels, especially those by Ion Idriess, William Hatfield and Eleanor Dark.¹⁹³ It is interesting to note that these authors in particular wrote of Australia, and on quintessentially Australian topics.

Illustrated books about Australia were also popular especially for those migrants ‘in the lower classes’,¹⁹⁴ and the Bathurst librarian suggested that multiple copies of works such as *Wildflowers of Australia*, *Urban Australia*, *Roaming Around Australia* and *This is Australia* should be available.¹⁹⁵ In keeping with the didactic themes around Australia and the Australian way of life, magazines

¹⁹⁰ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹¹ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹² Report by Librarian Education Section Bathurst, 27 July 1949 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹³ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3. Ion Idriess was a prolific Australian author of over 50 works including *The Cattle King*. William Hatfield, although English-born, wrote fiction, short stories and autobiographical works. His titles include *I Find Australia* and *Barrier Reef Days*. Eleanor Dark’s most famous work is possibly *The Timeless Land*.

¹⁹⁴ Report by Librarian Education Section Bonegilla, 21 July 1949 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹⁵ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

such as *Reader's Digest*, *Salt*, *Walkabout*, and *Australian Monthly* were also, reportedly, very popular.¹⁹⁶

Some migrants saw the availability of English print media as a means of learning English and it is noted that novels that had more slang within their conversation were not popular 'as they say they cannot understand them'.¹⁹⁷ English novels were also very popular, with works by authors such as Galsworthy, Huxley and Wells, which had been translated to European languages, familiar to the more educated DPs. In fact the librarian at Bathurst stated that reading books that have been previously read in translation was of great value 'as it helps them to recall words forgotten and to brush up their English if they know already [sic] the plot of the story'.¹⁹⁸ However, the type of books held in the Holding Centre libraries often included simple readers and picture books so that mothers, who it was thought were less likely to be competent readers, could read to their children and learn English in the process.¹⁹⁹

Interestingly, learning English was facilitated not just through the provision of English language books but also through a mixture of English, bi-lingual and foreign language works. This mix is evident in the Australian National Library list of books suitable for New Australians. Although their recommendations fulfilled the aim of education in the Australian way of life and Australian civics

¹⁹⁶ Report by Librarian Education Section Bathurst, 27 July 1949 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹⁷ Report by Librarian Education Section Bonegilla, 21 July 1949 National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹⁸ Report by Librarian Education Section Bathurst, 27 July 1949 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

¹⁹⁹ National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

with titles such as *Australia in Pictures*, Clark's *Select Documents in Australian History*, *Dangerous Snakes of Australia*, *Capital City: Canberra today and tomorrow*, and so on, they also recommended Australian content in the German language with books such as *Australien: Der funfte Kontinent* and *Australie waaheen?*²⁰⁰ In 1953, the DOI was pleased to welcome the help of the Australian Council for International Social Service, which established a library specifically to lend books to the accommodation centres and larger work camps. The aim of this library was to provide classics and popular works in mother tongues and English 'to facilitate the learning of English as a foreign language by providing the support of the mother tongue'.²⁰¹

It is impossible to measure the didactic success of libraries in terms of migrants learning English and being instructed in Australian civics and the Australian way of life; however, it seems that the libraries were popular among some of the centre residents, especially those who were accustomed to having access to books before the war. Certainly the Australian authorities were willing to spend from their limited resources in order to establish libraries. Finally, it is important to note that centre libraries not only provided books, they also provided opportunities for migrants to mix with Australians, and for Australians to fulfil their duty of assisting in migrant assimilation through the involvement of volunteer organisations. For example, Red Cross groups ran regular English and foreign language book drives, advertising for people to donate books to help

²⁰⁰ *Australia: The Fifth Continent* and *Australia Respectively*. National Archives Australia; D400, SA1960/69. National Archives Australia; D400, SA1960/69.

²⁰¹ Aileen Fitzpatrick, Australian Council for International Social Service to T.H.E. Heyes, 19 October 1953 in National Archives Australia; A445, 214/1/3.

migrants in the centres; other organisations, such as the Police Boys' Club, distributed books to migrant centres to help teach New Australians.²⁰²

5.4 *Education Post Reception and Training Centres*

On leaving the R&T centres, classes continued for breadwinners in the workers hostels and camps, and in some work-places, and employers were instructed by the Commonwealth Office of Education to encourage attendance.²⁰³ The success of classes in workers centres was patchy and while some employers, such as the South Australian Engineering and Water Supply Department, transported migrant workers to nearby towns for lessons on weekends, others made no effort or else work conditions were so tiring and locations so remote that organised lessons were difficult, if not impossible.²⁰⁴

Those migrants who did not move out to work camps or into the community (usually dependents, single women and children) continued to be housed in Holding Centres and migrant hostels. Within these centres, it was quickly recognised that women migrants were the most likely to struggle to learn, with authorities noting that:

it is found that ... mothers are the most difficult member of
the family group to become adjusted to the life of the new

²⁰² See for example *The Daily News*, Perth, 28 September 1949, 'Boy's Clubs Given Books', p 3, *The Horsham Times*, Horsham, Victoria, 3 June 1950, 'Red Cross Needs Foreign Books', p 2.

²⁰³ Circular, R.CC. Mills, Office of Education, n.d. in National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067.

²⁰⁴ National Archives Australia: D1917, D6/48 Part 2; Progress Reports DP Scheme.

country. In consequence the work in the Holding Centres is of the utmost importance,²⁰⁵

and therefore they were encouraged to learn English outside of the set classes.

According to the Department of Education, one way of addressing the perceived difficulty of engaging women in education activities was through the European women's love of craft activities and these quickly became seen as a useful supplementary aid to teaching English and Australian ways. Teachers were instructed to utilise these activities whenever possible and teachers were even occasionally employed not just for their teaching qualifications but also as a consequence of their own craft abilities.²⁰⁶ Correspondence from teachers to Commonwealth Education Officers outline the problems of women burdened with the sole responsibility of caring for young children in the centres. Once kindergartens were established, classes were organised to correspond with the session hours. This correspondence also shows the initiative of many teachers in this situation, using puppet shows, playing shops, organising outings to places like the zoo and inviting volunteer organisations such as the Country Women's Association to join outings so that children were entertained and engaged, allowing their mothers to learn something.²⁰⁷ This latter use of organisations was in keeping with the belief that the education of migrants, like assimilation itself, could 'only be achieved with the co-operation of the Australian

²⁰⁵ 'Migration in Action' n.d. p. 16 in National Archives Australia: A1887, IPS/98; Migration in Action.

²⁰⁶ R.C. Mills, Commonwealth Office of Education to Department of Immigration 12 May 1950 National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/213; Education in Holding Centres - Use of craft work to motivate learning in English.

²⁰⁷ Carrington, L., *A Real Situation*.

people'.²⁰⁸ Other groups, especially the GNM and the Young Women's Christian Association, as well as general services, such as baby health centres, were also enlisted to help educate migrant women in particular.²⁰⁹

Lessons were also specifically tailored to women and revolved around issues which were considered to be of greater interest and importance to female migrants, reflecting the opinions of the times. At Cowra for example, teaching materials introduced women to Betty and provided instruction not only on vocabulary and grammar but also on domestic issues such as how in *Betty makes a new dress* she is doing what many Australian women do, making their own clothes from paper patterns. Similarly *Betty does the washing* introduces names for items of clothing and household linens, verbs and so on, but also informs migrants that traditionally in Australia wash day is Monday and that on that day Betty does not cook a big dinner but gives her family cold meat, boiled potatoes and tinned fruit as she has been washing all day. Wider social etiquette is also covered in lessons such as *Betty goes to a 21st Birthday* and *Betty goes shopping*.²¹⁰

Centres latched on to special events and national celebrations so that, for example, Empire Day provided an opportunity to teach Australian history, and explain the links with Britain and the monarchy although the emphasis was that

²⁰⁸ Commonwealth Office of Education Circular, 1948 in National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067.

²⁰⁹ National Archives Australia: A445, 146/8/14; Citizenship Convention 1954. General. Part 2.

²¹⁰ See various examples of Supplementary Material, Education Section, Migrant Holding Centre Cowra, multiple dates in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/29.

‘the close ties are ties of unity not dependence’²¹¹ (see article on national celebrations in Chapter 9 for more details). Migrants were also taught how Australians typically celebrate such days with fireworks or with a minute’s silence for Armistice Day. Not surprisingly migrants were also taught the appropriate songs, such as *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory* on Empire Day.²¹² Migrants were also taught how Australians celebrate other events such as birthdays, Christmas and Easter. Differences from European customs were highlighted, for instance that Christmas presents are given on the day and not the eve, that Christmas dinner is served at lunch on the day and that even though it is summer, the tradition is to have a large meal including a heavy Christmas plum pudding. It must have been interesting, and contradictory, to migrants when they were instructed that ‘Christmas cards often of the European variety, showing European trees and snow [are] frequently exchanged [as] a way of indicating friendship for people to whom one does not normally write’.²¹³

The material for Australianisation was, therefore, interpreted very broadly from everyday life skills to expected and/or acceptable behaviours. This process was also carried through in specially designed illustrated posters displayed in accommodation centres.²¹⁴ A poster of a platypus, for example, introduced new vocabulary but also emphasised that you must not kill platypuses, as they are

²¹¹ The Trend of Australia’s Constitution, Education Section, Bathurst, 15 September 1949 in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/29.

²¹² National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/29. See also Chapter 9 for a broader discussion on the use of events in the assimilation program.

²¹³ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section II Seasonal, December 1953 in National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1; Migrant Education - teaching techniques and materials - Australianisation syllabus.

²¹⁴ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/21/31; Migrant Education - Teaching techniques and materials - Australianisation Material.

not dangerous and they cannot bite you.²¹⁵ Similarly, each month in *The New Australian*, the ‘Australian Values’ lessons included such topics as love of sport, gambling, surfing, sharks and bluebottles, horse racing, pubs, treatment of snake bites, country life versus town life and housing.²¹⁶ The Australian love of sport was a common conduit for wider social education, stressing that in Australia the emphasis is often on ‘physical “kultur” in comparison with [the] European culture of the mind’.²¹⁷ This was particularly evident in the lesson on Sundays which explained the difference between Australian and Continental Sundays and outlined the activities in which Australians typically partake, including church-going, visiting, motoring, picnics, private sports such as swimming, tennis and golf, and resting at home. Australians, migrants were informed, make their own entertainment on Sundays²¹⁸ (for related issues, see the article on sport in Chapter 7).

Perhaps the best indication of the breadth of topics taught under the heading of assimilation is available in the instructions given to teachers on what and how to teach. The suggested syllabus for teachers of English stated that although acquisition of the language was:

an essential pre-requisite to successful assimilation ... assimilation depends in the long run on understanding and living the Australian way. To assist the assimilation programme ... teachers need to teach their students the important things in Australian life, the pleasures and

²¹⁵ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/21/32; Migrant Education - Teaching techniques and materials - surveys of migrant education.

²¹⁶ National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/31.

²¹⁷ Australian Background, no author, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/31.

²¹⁸ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section I General, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

problems of living in Australia and the privileges and duties of citizenship. Our country, manners and customs.²¹⁹

There was certainly an emphasis on Australian history and politics including, perhaps surprisingly, lessons under the heading ‘Present Vital Questions’ where topics to be discussed included the White Australia Policy and the danger of the thousand million people to the north, Australia and the Pacific, and the British Commonwealth of Nations.²²⁰

There were also lessons in very practical skills such as making a will, elections and voting, social service benefits and work contracts, and the requirement to register births, deaths and marriages.²²¹ Broader lessons on health and safety covered issues such as swimming between the flags; the dangers of river swimming, swimming alone, and of diving; and problems related to Australia’s hot weather including sunstroke, sunburn, dressing for the seasons, and food deterioration in heat.²²² Teachers were also told to cover sensitive topics including personal hygiene and child rearing, although it was pointed out that these should be treated with ‘extreme tact’.²²³ According to the Commonwealth Department of Education, ‘[n]othing offends Australians more than departure from habits of personal cleanliness. Cleanliness in person and clothing is

²¹⁹ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section I General, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

²²⁰ Australian Background, no author, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/31.

²²¹ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section III Legal Requirements and Entitlements, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

²²² A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section II Seasonal, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

²²³ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section II Seasonal, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

essential'.²²⁴ Similarly, children in Australia, it was explained, were expected to help in the home but not expected to work. Most of their time should be spent at school and playing. Furthermore, '[s]evere punishment of children is not a feature of Australian parental control'.²²⁵

The *English a New Language* journal produced by the Commonwealth Office of Education was designed 'to keep teachers engaged in the instruction of newcomers who do not speak English'.²²⁶ This journal not only shared ideas from overseas and within Australia but also published paedology articles by leading scholars. Among the regular features were supplementary reading sections for teachers to use in class which often contained information for the newcomer about Australia. For example, a simply written story about summer and the danger of bushfires read:

In Australia it is hot in summer. The sun is very hot. If there is no rain, everything is very dry. The grass is very dry. The trees are very dry ...

When a man goes for a walk in the bush in summer he must not start a bushfire.²²⁷

The journal also provided a full list, over three pages, of all the topics expected to be covered in the Australianisation section of the course.²²⁸

²²⁴ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section II Seasonal, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

²²⁵ A Suggested Syllabus of Instruction about Australia for use by Teachers of English Classes for European Migrants, Section I General, n.d. in National Archives Australia; A1361, 33/21/5 PART 1.

²²⁶ Commonwealth Office of Education, 'Editorial' in *English A New Language: A Bulletin for Teachers of New Australians in Continuation Classes*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1950, p 2. This Bulletin was produced between 1950 and 1978.

²²⁷ Commonwealth Office of Education, 'English A New Language', Vol. 1, No. 1, 1950, p 13.

²²⁸ Commonwealth Office of Education, 'English A New Language', Vol. 1, No. 1, 1950.

Similar content was included in the radio broadcasts for New Australians which commenced in June 1949.²²⁹ Following the signature tune, “Waltzing Matilda”, programs included English lessons, a brief simplified news section, responses to questions from listeners and a story or performance by an Australian artist.²³⁰ By the mid-1950s, a special program for female migrants was instigated, which worked in conjunction with the previously mentioned lessons in the Holding Centres, to cover areas perceived to be of relevance to women such as shopping, the different types of household soap, and the etiquette of eating including the correct use of a knife and fork: ‘[w]e never put a knife or fork – or spoon – partly on the plate and partly on the table’.²³¹

It is interesting to note the types of lessons that came under the broad banner of assimilation and Australianisation. While many practical daily activities were covered, along with topics which could be expected under the category of civics for education towards citizenship, it is perhaps informative that so much of the content was about manners, customs, and behaviour. It might be argued that the motivation for this was to inform and acclimatise new arrivals and to help them ultimately to fit into the Australian community. However, it is also equally feasible that this training, especially within the accommodation centres, was to cushion the differences when the migrants went out into the wider society, to make them less “alien” to the host population and therefore represented a

²²⁹ Commonwealth Office of Education, 'English A New Language', Vol. 2, No. 1, 1951, p 2.

²³⁰ Commonwealth Office of Education, 'Editorial' in *English A New Language: A Bulletin for Teachers of New Australians in Continuation Classes*, Volume 2, Number 1, 1951.

²³¹ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/7/5 PART 25; Migrant Education - Radio Instruction for Migrants - Radio Script " Making Friends" - A Programme for New Australian Women - Numbers 1 to 100.

conscious attempt to aid in the acceptance of new arrivals and the mass migration scheme as a whole.

5.5 *Child Education*

Arthur Calwell claimed that children would be ‘indeed the best immigrants of all’.²³² This sentiment was often echoed in DOI and other documents such as a 1948 Commonwealth Office of Education Circular which stated that ‘[t]he children coming to Australia will almost certainly make better Australians than their parents’.²³³ This belief came from the idea that children were quick to learn English and, as Knorr and Nunes argue, they ‘acquire new cultural knowledge well, they are often more involved in the social life of the host society, and they socialise with less constraint and prejudice’.²³⁴ Children therefore were preferred migrants because they were readily assimilable, and as the Australian response to the 1952 UNESCO survey indicated, ‘by working through the children it has been possible to reach the parents’.²³⁵

However, as Calwell went on to say to Parliament, ‘[i]t is vital that children should come out young enough to pass their school days with Australians’.²³⁶ In keeping with this sentiment migrant children were a significant proportion of arrivals: between January 1947 and June 1951 an estimated 23 per cent of DP

²³² A. Calwell, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 2 August 1945, Migration, House of Representatives.

²³³ R.C.Mills, Commonwealth Office of Education Circular in National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067.

²³⁴ Knorr, J. & Nunes, A., 'Introduction' in Jacqueline, K. (ed.) *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, Transcript, Verlag, 2005, p 15.

²³⁵ Notes Supplied by The Commonwealth Department of Immigration in response to U.N.E.S.C.O. Questionnaire CL/635 of April 1952, p 9 in National Archives Australia; A1838, 862/24/1.

²³⁶ A. Calwell, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 2 August 1945, Migration, House of Representatives.

arrivals were aged 0-16 years. In the same period 48,920 of the 168,199, or 29 per cent, of arrivals under mass resettlement schemes were under the age of 21.²³⁷ For the majority of these children, life in Australia began in the accommodation centres and as Panich notes:

sheltered from the stresses of everyday survival, immigrant children experienced the new life as an unrivalled adventure ... Propelled into an expanded world, children were afforded probably the best education of all.²³⁸

However, this was not the case for all children and as one social work report on the refugee arrivals of the 1950s states, 'some of the young migrants from Iron Curtain countries find considerable difficulty in adjusting to conditions here. Their new freedom can be rather frightening – there are no longer close family ties'.²³⁹

Early discussions on how migrant children should be educated included the suggestion of centralising all non-English speaking children in a special school for a period of twelve months before they were transferred to regular schools. However, in the interest of assimilation, it was considered undesirable to allow these children to stay together in one group, instead of being spread among as many schools as possible, as it was felt that they would learn English most

²³⁷ Notes on Discussion between Expert Advisers and the Social Welfare Committee of the Immigration Advisory Council, 1 February 1952, p. 9 in National Archives Australia: A445, 140/5/6; Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare.

²³⁸ Panich, C., *Sanctuary?*, p 70.

²³⁹ Annual Report June 1958- July 1959, Social Worker F Ferguson in National Archives Australia: C3076, 5/1/4 CENTRAL; Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - Central - Department of Immigration - Social Workers [Box 699].

easily when they mixed naturally with ordinary Australian children.²⁴⁰ Therefore, in the interests of assimilation, migrant children were encouraged to attend local schools, and in many centres such as Glenelg in South Australia, children from the hostel walked to the local school, St Leonards Primary.

St Leonard's proximity to the Glenelg Migrant Hostel meant that large numbers of non-English speaking children arrived at regular intervals, as migrants moved into the hostel from Bonegilla and other R&T centres, or directly from the ship. On arrival at the school, children initially were placed in the class which corresponded to their age. In a written submission to the Hostel Stories Project, a Dutch migrant who arrived with her family in 1953 and travelled from Bonegilla to Woodside and then Glenelg where she attended St Leonards, wrote:

I couldn't understand a word the teacher was saying as well as some others in the class. I must commend the class teacher and the headmistress who had a special understanding with migrants. There was no special language class for migrant children and [that] meant grappling with a new language in a very adhoc way. For spelling the class teacher would write a word on the blackboard and draw a picture beside it. I found this very helpful and soon was made progress [sic] learning words. The repetition reinforced the learning process and gradually it was starting to make sense.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 6 October 1949 Assembly - Teaching English, p 804.

²⁴¹ Written submission from Anita Wymer (nee Bruce), Hostel Stories Project, University of Adelaide.

Problems such as those identified above resulted in a change in practice so that by the mid-1950s there was a hybrid scheme in operation where, for part of the day, children received English lessons with a specialist teacher. Although the school acknowledged that the resulting segregation ‘proved a hindrance to assimilation’, they recognised that these classes were essential for the children to progress with their education.²⁴² During daily activities, however, migrant children were encouraged to use only the English language and to mix within the classes as much as possible especially during activities such as music, drawing and physical education. Migrant children were also physically mixed within classes so that they sat with Australian-born children rather than other migrants.²⁴³ In keeping with the principles of assimilation and the adoption of the Australian way of life, the school journal indicated that the ‘chief object is to teach the children English, some Australian history and geography’.²⁴⁴ The school established a close relationship with the hostel, and in the interests of assimilating parents, they encouraged them to attend school events and join in school fund-raising and other activities, admittedly most often with little success.²⁴⁵

However, because many of the centres were in rural and remote settings, local primary schools were sometimes difficult to access and as a result, schools were established within the centres themselves. Funded by the Commonwealth, the primary schools were designed in consultation with the State Education

²⁴² Notes on the work being done with migrants at St Leonards, no author, n.d. in National Archives Australia: D400, SA1959/3095; Inquiry into conduct and progress of migrant children.

²⁴³ National Archives Australia; D400, SA1959/3095.

²⁴⁴ South Australian State Records: GRS 7330/1; St Leonards School Journals. 4 April 1955.

²⁴⁵ South Australian State Records: GRS 7330/1; St Leonards School Mothers Club Minutes.

Departments and equipped and staffed by the States.²⁴⁶ The Commonwealth provided a residence for the headmaster which generally consisted of three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, bathroom, lavatory and laundry. So-called cubicle accommodation was available for other teachers who wished to live on site, and they also had access to the staff mess at a cost of 30/- per week per person for lodging and meals.²⁴⁷

Reports from centre headmasters and social workers give insight into some of the difficulties these schools and their pupils faced, and indicate that the oft-touted general belief that school-aged children learnt and coped readily was perhaps not always accurate. In a long article submitted to an education journal, J.B. Cox, the Headmaster at Greta Camp Migrant School, outlined the difficulties that teachers faced. At centre schools, unlike State schools, large numbers of children with little or no English but a great variety of mother tongues were enrolled at any one time. Teachers had no special training or language skills therefore, and in keeping with the principles of assimilation, English was the basis of all instruction. English, Mr Cox wrote, 'was the avenue to mutual understanding ... the key to the success of the whole immigration project'.²⁴⁸ Alongside of English lessons, taught, as for adults, by the direct method, teachers made use of fairy tales, jingles and songs. Much emphasis was placed on general assemblies, the singing of the national anthem, the use of play to gain trust and encourage an Australian outdoor healthy lifestyle, the

²⁴⁶ National Archives Australia: A434, 1949/3/13604; Use of School Buildings at Immigration Centres for Religious Instruction.

²⁴⁷ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/35/21; Woodside centre - establishment of State school etc.

²⁴⁸ Cox, J.B., 'Helping Migrant Children to Settle into School Life' in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, p 32.

celebration of important national events and attempting to involve migrant parents. As Mr Cox explained:

Into such ceremonies the fabric of our Australian way of life is woven. It is through these gatherings that the New Australians will learn to fit into our school life and later into our society. On special days throughout the year - Empire Day, Anzac Day, Magna Carta Day, Bird Day, Arbor Day etc., a special programme is arranged and the parents, clergy and Camp officials are invited to attend ... Thus they are helped to learn the significance of all that we honour and respect.²⁴⁹

Although as previously stated emphasis was placed on the child as a potential gateway to the assimilation of parents, parent participation was often difficult to achieve due to adult language issues, work schedules, and, perhaps fear and anxiety. Teachers reported on 'lurking fears, restlessness, past anxieties, distrust for the stranger, uncertainty for the future, and lost self-esteem' in both parents and children who they said had tendencies to be 'suspicious of everyone, their fellows and those trying to help them'.²⁵⁰ Educating migrant children was often made more difficult by the lack of information about any previous schooling, education disrupted by war, difficulties in assessing established knowledge and the rapid transit of many families through various centres.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Cox, J.B., 'Helping Migrant Children to Settle into School Life', p 32.

²⁵⁰ Cox, J.B., 'Helping Migrant Children to Settle into School Life', p 31.

²⁵¹ National Archives Australia; C3076, 5/1/4 CENTRAL.

These same issues also applied to older children; however, their schooling had to occur in local State high schools as no secondary schools were established in migrant centres. As the respondents in Murphy's study of the Woodside Centre testify, the experiences of, and reception towards, these new arrivals was mixed. A young Austrian girl commented that the first day at the local Oakbank High School

was a great babble of noise and tests but the teachers were lovely, and one gave me one to one tuition in English at lunch time. I remember the girls beckoning to me at recess time and we went out under one of those lovely, big gum trees and one of them had brought from home a big watermelon and she shared it around. I had never seen a thing like this before. They included me and didn't make me feel like an alien creature and they weren't snobbish at all.²⁵²

However, for Ukrainian-born Stefania Reimer the experience was very different as she described her time at Oakbank:

talk about aliens! ... One teacher gave us a bit of a hard time. She'd get you out to the front and she knew we couldn't understand hardly anything and she'd make a fool of you.²⁵³

Australian-born pupils also gave new arrivals a mixed reception. Although as one report stated, generally Australian children were 'receiving them in kindly manner' it was also noted that their attitudes tended to reflect those of their parents and those expressed in their homes. Therefore, State and Commonwealth Education Departments provided information to schools which

²⁵² Murphy, C. (ed.) *Boat Load of Dreams*, p 65.

²⁵³ Murphy, C. (ed.) *Boat Load of Dreams*, p 81.

they hoped would “condition” Australian children, and indirectly their homes, to the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants.²⁵⁴

The placement of migrant children within a regular school system, either in the centres or the wider community, was considered to be in the best interests of promoting assimilation into the Australian way of life, and the learning of English. It was also seen as an indirect method to aid in the assimilation of their parents. Although the educational experiences of these children were very mixed, the lack of English and other difficulties they faced resulted in lower levels of education for some children, particularly teenagers. As Jenkins concludes; in reality school inspectors and Department of Education officers ‘were too inexperienced, overworked and ill equipped to recognise or grapple with the problems these students experienced, or to formulate sound policies or programmes to settle these children into the Australian community.’²⁵⁵

For pre-school children, special kindergartens were established and the methods of education for this cohort and their parents are discussed in the article in sub-section 5.6 below.

²⁵⁴ R.C. Mills, Commonwealth Office of Education, Circular: Education of European Displaced Persons, n.d. in National Archives Australia; MP275/1, 1953/1067.

²⁵⁵ Jenkins, P.A.B., *Australian Political Elites and Citizenship Education for 'New Australians' 1945-1960*, University of Sydney, 2001, p 109.

5.6 Article 1: Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia

The following article published in the *International Journal of Play* argues that even young children were not excluded and that the play-centres established within the hostels were important sites of assimilation for them and their families. It outlines how play-centres moved from hastily established, overcrowded child-minding centres, often run by untrained staff, in the late 1940s to well-organised, supervised play-centres in the 1950s and how, through songs, stories, and special activities, migrant and refugee children from diverse backgrounds mixed and learnt how to be “New” Australians. The article argues that a key aspect of the work performed by these play-centres within migrant centres was the assimilation not only of the children but also of their families, in particular their mothers.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Title of Paper | Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia |
| Publication Status | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Karen Agutter (2016) Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia, <i>International Journal of Play</i> , 5:3, 277-291, DOI:10.1080/21594937.2016.1207811 To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2016.1207811 |

Principal Author

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------|------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | | |
| Contribution to the Paper | This paper is based on my own original research and is wholly my own work | | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 100% | | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | | |
| Signature | | Date | 8 - 5 - 17 |

Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia

Karen Agutter

Department of History, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, South Australia

ABSTRACT

In post-war Australia, the provision of facilities for migrant and refugee children to 'play' in migrant accommodation centres was an essential element of government policy. Through an examination of photos and related archival material, this paper will consider how play was used as a means of introducing newly arrived young children to the English language and the Australian way of life. The paper will outline how play centres moved from hastily established, overcrowded child-minding centres, often run by untrained staff, in the late 1940s to well-organised, supervised play centres in the 1950s. It will then consider how, through songs, stories, and special activities, migrant and refugee children from diverse backgrounds mixed and learnt how to be 'New' Australians. Finally it will argue that a key aspect of the work of these centres was the assimilation not only of the children but also of their families, in particular their mothers.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 April 2016
Accepted 13 June 2016

KEYWORDS

Migrant children;
assimilation; play; Australia;
migrant hostels

Introduction

During the nineteenth century a small number of private kindergartens, generally for the children of middle class families, operated in Australia. It was not until the end of that century, however, that the idea of kindergartens for the wider community, and in particular the children of poorer urban families, began to take hold. These early centres, known as Free Kindergartens (free from cost and religious denomination), were generally conducted in community facilities and run by benevolent committees without government assistance (Pendred, 1964, p. 388). However, in 1938, the Commonwealth Government, on the recommendation of the Australian Medical Research Council, established demonstration early childhood education centres in each of the six state capitals. Known as the Lady Gowrie Centres, their key responsibilities were: to test and demonstrate methods for the care and education of young children; to study the problems associated with growth, nutrition and development; and to provide facilities for research (Pendred, 1964, p. 391). Despite the establishment of the Gowrie Centres, and the increased organisation of local kindergarten unions into a national body, the Australian Pre-School Association, (Pendred, 1964, p. 390) by the early 1940s only 5680 (of approximately half a million)

CONTACT Karen Agutter  karen.agutter@adelaide.edu.au  Department of History, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA 5005, South Australia

© 2016 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

children aged 2–6 were enrolled in Free Kindergartens across Australia (Cumpston & Henig, 1945, pp. 197–198).

Although the Australian Pre School Association and the Lady Gowrie Centres had heightened the general awareness of the importance of early childhood education, the quality of what was available varied considerably (Mellor, 1990, pp. 177–178). In the 1940s, parent-initiated kindergartens, with local groups raising the necessary funds, were prevalent in many states (Mellor, 1990, p. 177). By the 1950s, municipal authorities had also become involved in the establishment of local kindergartens, mainly by way of grants, provision of land and assistance with maintenance (Mellor, 1990, p. 177). However, as Mellor (1990, p. 177) explains, even though the free kindergarten movement had developed from a service for the children of the poor early in the century, to one for the wider population post-World War II, pre-school centres were in short supply, and availability varied considerably across states. By 1951 there were only 230 centres around Australia with a lack of government support blamed for the lack of expansion and uniformity (Spearritt, 1979, pp. 24–25). In contrast to this poorly funded and disorderly system of mainstream kindergarten provision a second parallel system of pre-school education was being established in the migrant accommodation centres for the children of newly arrived migrants.

In the years after the Second World War Australia embarked on an ambitious programme of population and economic expansion and key to this was a mass immigration scheme unlike any previously undertaken in this country. For the first time, under the supervision of the newly formed Department of Immigration, Australia actively sought migrants from beyond the traditional Anglo-Celtic countries of its past, accepting over 170,000 Displaced Persons (DPs) from Europe before going on to negotiate assisted passage agreements with a number of European nations.

On entering Australia all refugee and most assisted European migrant arrivals were housed, for varying lengths of time, in a system of government-provided hostels.¹ For the majority of these so-called ‘New Australians’² their first weeks were spent in remote ex-army camps such as Bonegilla and Bathurst, which had been repurposed as Reception and Training Centres. It was in these centres that the work of learning English and being introduced into the ‘Australian way of life’,³ which had begun on-board ship, continued. Refugees and European-assisted passage migrants were tied to two-year work contracts and it is from the Reception and Training Centres that single men and women, and married breadwinners were allocated to employment. For DPs in particular, this work was most commonly in remote and regional areas which, for family groups, often meant extended periods of separation as mothers and children were sent to Holding Centres (such as Cowra, Benalla and Wacol) to wait either for their partners to find local accommodation (a difficult task in post-war Australia which was suffering from an acute housing shortage) or the completion of the two-year work contract.

Living in these centres were large numbers of young children who were considered to be essential to Australia’s future population growth. These children were seen as the ideal new Australians, capable of being assimilated more readily and more rapidly into the host society. From the very first arrivals the belief was that migrant children would ‘almost certainly make better Australians than their parents’ (National Archives Australia [NAA], MP275/1, 1953/1067) and in 1958 Alexander Downer, Minister for Immigration

(Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 14 August, 1958, p. 19) was able to state that: 'Of all the migrants Australia desired, the best were children who were of an impressionable age and who could be moulded to the Australian way of life'.⁴ However, authorities also believed that children could play a vital role in the assimilation of their parents and extended families. As the mediators between their world of origin and their host society, children, especially school age children, held the potential to re-educate and to encourage the participation of their parents in the wider community and therefore assist in their assimilation. As John Storey, Chairman of the Immigration Planning Council stated, the assimilation of adult new arrivals would not happen overnight and therefore it was the migrant children 'on whom we should concentrate' (Commonwealth Department of Immigration, 1950).

Although assimilation of new arrivals, as the essential foundation of the Australian Immigration Policy that operated from the late 1940s until the 1960s, has been generally accepted (see e.g. Haebich, 2008 and Murphy, 2000), in recent years, some scholars have argued that it was in fact 'poorly conceived, ill-defined and without financial or human resources for meaningful implementation' (Markus & Taft, 2015, p. 234). However, Kokegei (2012) argues the application of the policy was in fact far more nuanced than has previously been accepted and, as this paper demonstrates, the migrant accommodation centres provided an opportunistic environment to push the assimilation agenda. For children of all ages the role of play and recreation within the accommodation centres served a dual purpose. Keeping children occupied was essential to relieve the inevitable boredom of centre life but play and play centres were also seen as a means to assimilate young children and their parents, to train them in Australian ways and to prepare them for future citizenship. Key to assimilation was the development of English language skills and, to facilitate this, much emphasis was placed on migrant children attending local schools wherever possible (NAA: K279, 1948/979 Part 2). For children aged 3–5, however, the Commonwealth Government provided pre-schools within the centres themselves and it is these play/pre-school centres, during the 1950s, that are the subject of this paper.

After outlining how pre-schools developed in the migrant accommodation system this paper will move to an examination of contemporary photographs and archival documents to show how, within these migrant accommodation centres, children from diverse backgrounds mixed, and learnt how to be new Australians. It will argue that these centres provided a perfect blend of play and education and through encouraged participation, regular newsletters and information sessions also provided an important means of educating and assimilating families, in particular migrant mothers.

Before moving forward it is important to spend a moment on the terminology used in this paper. From the 1800s until the 1950s centres which provided educational programmes for 3–6-year-olds were commonly referred to as Kindergartens primarily as a consequence of the various kindergarten unions under which they were affiliated (Mellor, 1990, p. 176). However, by the late 1950s the term pre-school had largely superseded that of kindergarten although in some states the two terms were used interchangeably (Mellor, 1990, p. 176). Within the archival documents on migrant centres three terms are regularly used namely, kindergartens, pre-schools and play centres and in this paper they can be considered as interchangeable with each other.

The establishment of pre-schools in migrant accommodation centres

Within two years of the first DP arrivals a small number of accommodation centres had established makeshift play facilities utilising any spare space or building, crude equipment and employing primarily migrant women residents as carers/teachers. These makeshift facilities were very much improvised 'child-minding' centres rather than, as contemporary literature argued, places to teach children 'in a pleasant atmosphere of play' how to be:

honest and thrifty, to be obedient to authority, to be kindly, courteous to their fellows and to adults, to have good manners, to be courageous and manly, or to be womanly, as the case may be ... to look after the care of their bodies and lastly to say their Grace and thank God for the good things of life, (Bostock, 1943, p. 57)

qualities closely aligned to those embodied in the idealised view of an Australian way of life.

Government commissioned reports on these early facilities were damning of the majority of pre-schools in centres. At Benalla, for example, the untrained migrant staff reportedly controlled the 75 children in their care by:

rushing up and down [the] aisle between the rows of tables, clapping hands for silence, saying 'sit down', 'don't do that', [standing children] in the corner for being 'naughty' ... [and crying] 'Oh far too much noise, my head will ache'. (NAA: A445, 220/51/7)

Reports were equally critical of the lack of equipment at the majority of centres. At Wacol, children had access to only a few soft toys and 'one lump of dirty plasticine about the size of a pear'. Furthermore, they could not play outside as the gravelled play area consisted of four swings and a slide which was considered to be too dangerous as it was too high and on an acute angle, as well as two sandpits with no sand (NAA: A445, 220/51/20). Other centres had sand but no toys, making do with tin cans, damaged and broken playthings and small pieces of blackboard and tiny fragments of white chalk (NAA: A445, 220/51/7). At Cowra the tables and chairs were described as 'dreadful and practically useless' (NAA: A445, 220/51/77) and toilet facilities were also problematic with 80 children making do with 8 chamber pots at one centre (NAA: A445, 220/51/7).

Consequently, in June 1950, Treasury approved the construction of dedicated pre-schools in migrant accommodation centres (NAA: K279, 1948/979 Part 2) with the published aim of providing 'migrant children of pre-school age resident in Immigration Centres with the facilities to develop a mental and physical attitude to life of the Australian pattern' (NAA: A445, 220/51/7). Miss Olga Leschen, of the Kindergarten Union of Victoria, was employed as Officer in Charge of Pre-School Services for Migrant Centres and tasked with improving the standard of these pre-schools.⁵

Over the next five years Leschen established a fully Government-supported standardised system of pre-school services within migrant accommodation centres. Despite general pre-school staff shortages she insisted that all centres were to be under the charge of a properly trained pre-school teacher who was answerable in the first instance to a state-based coordinator and then to Leschen herself. Leschen also successfully argued for the establishment of suitable staff-pupil ratios and standardised and suitable play and other equipment. She set hours based on the half-day attendances used by kindergartens in the wider community, and insisted on the serving of suitable food and drink as much for the accompanying training in manners this facilitated as for its nutritional benefits.

Despite her drive for standardisation, Leschen also recognised that some centres were in fact more important to ongoing assimilation and education than others. She therefore varied the pre-school services offered and dedicated the majority of her funding and training to the pre-schools in the holding centres, where mothers and children could be resident for months or years and where ‘the children will really receive their initial training and Pre-School experience’ (NAA: A445, 220/51/8). As Leschen herself reported:

There are many differences in the administration of these Pre-School Centres in transit camps [Reception and Training Centres], as very few children stay more than a few weeks, therefore they can be little more than a play nursery ... the children will receive better programmes when they arrive in their respective holding centres. (NAA: A445, 220/51/8)

By 1952 there were 25 pre-schools in migrant centres across Australia accommodating 2805 children aged 3–5 and representing 19 nationalities. The staff–pupil ratio was 1–15 and all centres were supervised, in rotation, for periods of not less than 3 weeks by Leschen herself. All children had twice monthly full health checks by the accommodation centre doctor. While some centres were still under improvement, all had fully fenced outdoor play areas, a range of toys and other equipment funded by the Commonwealth Government and subsidised by Centre amenity funds, centre carpentry classes and donations (NAA: AA1969/441, 18/12). Most importantly, as Leschen (*The West Australian*, 1951) stated, all migrant pupils were acquiring ‘a grounding in the Australian way of life’.

Play in pictures: the photographic collection

Migrant children, and the accommodation centre pre-schools they attended, are the subject of a significant photographic record now held by the National Archives of Australia.⁶ From its establishment in 1945 the Department of Immigration employed photographers to pictorially record the arrival and integration of migrants into the Australian community. Primarily used for promotional material both at home, and overseas to attract new migrants, these photos were also used to illustrate publications and reports, to accompany the documentation of foreign visitors and journalists and other such purposes. The migrant pre-school photographs were often taken in consultation with Leschen for use in the monthly Pre-School Bulletin and many of these photos were bound into large leather albums for each centre.

Many photographs are obviously ‘staged’ to provide the required message to both their overseas and Australian audiences but in examining these photographs one is immediately struck by what can only be described as the ‘normality’ of the subjects. If one ignores the exteriors which portray the wider view of the migration centre with its rows of huts (see [Figure 1](#)), or the interior images taken under the distinctive curved roof of the Nissen hut (see [Figure 2](#)), these children could be in any pre-school in any city and that, of course, was the primary aim, to show the progress of assimilation.

In keeping with the desired message for the Australian public children were carefully selected and posed. Photographs depict, often fair haired children (in line with the expectations of the so-called ‘White Australia Policy’),⁷ sitting nicely at tables, concentrating intently on activities, participating in manipulative play, painting at easels, carrying out domestic role play in the dolls corner or climbing across playground equipment. To the



Figure 1. Somers pre-school playground (National Archives Australia: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 12).

Australian public they are perfect new Australians already on the way to being fully assimilated.

Within the archival record are Leschen's regular inventories of centre pre-schools, listing in minute detail the equipment purchased and maintained for migrant children's use.⁸ These long lists of individual items, for indoor and outdoor use, indicate equipment typical of pre-schools in the wider community and examination of photographs of centres, such as that reproduced in [Figure 2](#), support this conclusion. Children sit at small tables and chairs, in the reading corner and the music area, and in keeping with the attitudes of the day, play in areas divided primarily along gender lines with blocks, trucks and carpentry materials for boys and a household corner for girls. As in mainstream pre-school centres at this time role play around household and life tasks were emphasised through



Figure 2. Scheyville pre-school (National Archives Australia: A12111, 1/1955/22/7).

equipment such as toy tea sets, telephones and cash registers.⁹ However, examination of other archival sources indicates that many of the ways in which the children and staff used these pieces were specific to the migrant child and what these photographs do not show is how the childrens' play reflected their previous experience and environment. Leschen's reports illustrate how post-War Europe and the hostel itself had impacted upon these children. She writes that having witnessed a 'lovely dramatic play' where four children dressed up in adult clothes and attempted to imitate the role of mother and parent that she was particularly struck by 'the limitation of the children's domestic experience [as] practically all the children have never seen a normal home life' (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). Furthermore, the spatial limitations of life, both in Europe and now in Australia, influenced many of the children who, every time the staff spread out the dolls corner furniture 'immediately crowd[ed] it all up in one corner, the closer the better, in imitation of their own living quarters' (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). Pre-school staff were highly aware of the artificial nature of life in the migrant centres and in one centre they encouraged excursions to 'traditional homes', described by one teacher as delightful and valuable experiences for children who rarely see a 'normal home' (NAA: A445, 220/51/17).

Lack of language skills was of course another issue that impacted strongly the experience of children in hostel pre-schools. The learning of English was considered to be fundamental to assimilation into the host society and was important in preparing migrant children for their ongoing education in the Australian school system (NAA: A445, 220/51/20). Everyday play pieces were used to teach and reinforce the English language. Migrant children learnt the English words for objects through visualisation and repetition, so that a doll's tea set was not just an instrument for role play but also provided an introduction to a vocabulary and a mechanism to teach the verbs that were used in conjunction with the activity – to drink, to pour, to eat, to cut and so on (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). There was also an emphasis on learning English through storytelling, finger plays and singing and all centres had a piano and other musical instruments as well as extensive libraries of picture, story and alphabet books. There are many photographs of story time in the pre-school centres with children posed in neat rows, eyes front apparently engrossed in the teacher's words. What Leschen's (NAA: A445, 220/51/17) reports add to this picture, however, is that although all aspects of pre-school were officially to be conducted in English, in reality a degree of flexibility was required as at many centres the turnover of children was so high that when large numbers of many nationalities arrived, especially at one time, stories were often replaced with discussion of pictures and objects in order to help them acquire a basic English vocabulary.¹⁰ Daily programme plans also indicate that pre-school play time was often given over to small-group, dedicated language classes to improve language capabilities (NAA: A445, 220/51/20).

Leschen was a great advocate of manipulative and creative play and numerous photos show young children working with clay and other materials.¹¹ What is most notable about these particular images is the consistently small staff–pupil ratio (see [Figure 3](#) below). Leschen observed that migrant children were particularly slow to be creative and she regularly reminded her staff to encourage the children in these activities. In correspondence between herself and a teacher at the Scheyville centre she noted that it took longer for migrant childrens' painting to move out of the 'experimental stage' and the teacher



Figure 3. Somers pre-school (National Archives Australia: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 6).

agreed that these children initially really struggled to be creative as they required constant direction from the teacher (NAA: A445, 220/51/17).

Outdoor play was seen as particularly important. At the Scheyville Centre, for example, where there was in excess of 130 children aged 3–5 years, space to play was essential as the huts they called home were ‘very small and quite inadequate for a child to have any freedom of movement’ (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). The importance of outside play is reflected in the significant proportion of the photos within the collection, (see [Figure 1](#) for example), which show children painting at easels out of doors or running and climbing in outdoor playgrounds (NAA: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 12). As the teacher at the Benalla Holding Centre observed, confined indoor play was problematic in migrant children who were highly excitable and constantly sought adult attention. To her it was:

obvious that these children need so much to feel ‘wanted and secure’ in a homely environment, plenty of space and a freer programme. (Sylvia Dicker, Pre-school teacher Benalla, 19 August 1953 in (NAA: A445, 220/51/7))

The freedom to roam, to move beyond the confines of the hut and the camp, is illustrated in many of the photographs. At Woodside Centre in the Adelaide Hills, for example, images show children and teachers dwarfed by towering gums during nature walks or kneeling examining, collecting and drawing Australian flora.¹²

In the interest of ongoing learning, Leschen encouraged her staff to keep notebooks of the subjects that they used for their nature talks and walks and to note what the children enjoyed and understood (NAA: A445, 220/51/7). These large open spaces also provided the backdrop for large-scale Easter egg hunts, picnics and other special occasions when mothers were encouraged to participate.

Excursions outside of the centre were important assimilationist events and there was a deliberate fostering of contact with Australian pre-schools, with visits to and from children at local Lady Gowrie centres, of picnics, games and afternoon teas, which promoted mixing between migrant children, migrant mothers and Australians (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). The Australian public was regularly reminded of the important role they could

play in the assimilation of new migrants, and photographs, such as that of a local farmer at Bonegilla pictured surrounded by children holding and learning about young animals in a very hands-on manner, reinforced this.¹³

Despite the preponderance of staged photographs there are many much more spontaneous examples, especially in relation to special events such as Christmas and Easter. These were very social occasions and provided the pre-schools with important opportunities to encourage parents to become involved in the pre-school activities.¹⁴ Large numbers of photos show communal Easter egg hunts, nativity plays and Christmas parties where large groups of children and parents of many different nationalities came together to celebrate and more importantly to mix with each other.

Assimilating migrant mothers

Migrant pre-schools had a broader role than the assimilation of young migrant children through play and structured activity in that they also provided the opportunity to train and assist in the assimilation of migrant mothers. One of the roles of pre-school teachers in migrant centres was 'Parent Work'. A close parent-teacher relationship was considered necessary not only for the child's progress but also to engage parents (Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council, 1960, p. 8). The first step was to encourage mothers, and occasionally fathers, into the pre-school centres with their children, to get them involved in their children's play and learning and in so doing helping them to mix and learn themselves.

Parent work was particularly important in centres such as Bonegilla, Woodside and Greta where the distance across the camp was great with children having to travel half to three-quarters of a mile by foot to attend. As Leschen stated in her report to the Department of Immigration at Woodside:

the centre is located far from the living quarters so attendance can be very irregular. Because it is so far away the parents don't see what is going on and this has some consequences including new parents are chary of sending their children ... Parents rarely have the opportunity to see the Play Centre activities, hence it is not possible to carry on the same day by day parent-teacher relationship which is a valuable part of the Play Centre contribution to the adult migrants. (NAA: A445, 220/51/22)

One way of overcoming the lack of parent involvement was through home visits (see [Figure 4](#)) and pre-school teachers were expected to visit all mothers in their huts to encourage regular attendance and ensure all children were enrolled (NAA: A445, 220/51/20).

Leschen also noted that parents, especially those newly arrived needed to be made aware that 'these are important centres and not child minding facilities' and regular meetings and information sessions were held to educate migrant parents about the pre-school, its aims and activities (NAA: A445, 220/51/77). At Scheyville mothers (and fathers) were invited to use the equipment as their children did and at the end of the meeting they were taught one of the songs the children regularly sung (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). At Wacol the teacher used photos, posters and pictures in an attempt to overcome the language barrier and improve parental language skills, and to explain what the children did at the centre (NAA: A445, 220/51/20). The importance of books and how to choose suitable books



Figure 4. Teacher Miss I Ryan chats with migrant mother, Bonegilla (National Archives Australia: A12111, 1/1956/22/37).

for your child was a regular meeting topic (NAA: A445, 220/51/17) and pre-schools had lending libraries ‘to enable mothers to share with their children, a greater variety of books than is normally available to them’ (NAA: A445, 220/51/8). In consideration of parental language difficulties and levels of literacy, and as the children’s books were written in simple language, it was felt that mothers themselves may be able to learn some English when reading with their children (NAA: A445, 220/51/8). In reality this expectation must have placed a great deal of pressure and considerable hardship upon many mothers who had literacy issues in their own native languages as well as difficulty in learning English.

As in mainstream kindergartens the education of parents in the principles of caring for children was an underlying goal. Unlike the predominantly one-page parent notices which began in regular kindergartens in 1944 (Pendred, 1964, p. 398), within the centres the *Parents Bulletin* took the form of monthly booklets illustrated with simple line drawings. The aim of these monthly newsletters, in the words of the Secretary of the Assimilation Division, was to draw the ‘mothers of pre-school children into community activities and to assist generally their assimilation’ (NAA: A445, 220/51/8). Outside of the general informational material including upcoming events these booklets contained the words of songs the children were singing and simple short stories for mothers to read

to their children (NAA: A445, 220/51/8). At Christmas and Easter, mothers were reminded that if they wanted to share in the celebrations with their children they should learn the songs the children would sing and pages of lyrics for songs such as Jingle bells and Twinkle Little Star would follow (NAA: A445, 220/51/8).

Family education in Australian standards of hygiene, behaviour and care was a common goal in the migrant centres. Large numbers of photos show miniature wash-rooms and rows of pristine white towels hanging on hooks not unlike those to be found in mainstream kindergartens; however, the captions emphasise the intent of the photos in the teaching of good habits.¹⁵ Through the *Parents Bulletin* mothers were regularly reminded about washing the provided small towel (in the communal laundry facilities provided) for return to the centre with the child each Monday and on the necessity for each child to attend cleanly and suitably dressed with a clean handkerchief or piece of cloth (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). Similarly, many centres reported that migrant parents were slow to dress their children suitably for the Australian climate and consequently advice on how to dress children for the Australian conditions was regularly given. Parents were reminded that it is 'not necessary for children to wear long stockings or too many woollen clothes, even in winter' (NAA: A445, 220/51/20).

Each *Parents Bulletin* focused on a different parenting topic such as teaching mothers the importance of tidy habits which, begun in the pre-school, must be continued at home (NAA: A445, 220/51/8) or other advice such as this abbreviated example from a two-page piece on the good and bad child .

MARY IS A GOOD GIRL – BECAUSE – She is always busy AND Mother lets her help with little jobs (going to the shop, bringing the broom, carrying the clothes pegs ...) SO She is happy BECAUSE She feels her mother needs her ... IF She is naughty she is not punished by being hit every time ... [by contrast] TOM IS A NAUGHTY BOY – BECAUSE – He is always told to 'Go away and play' SO he thinks his mother does not want him AND He does naughty things to make people notice him ... THEN he is smacked, which makes him angry ... IF his mother stopped hitting him AND spent a little time helping him feel important TOM would be good like Mary. (NAA: A445, 220/51/17)

Overall, by 1954 Greshen (NAA: A445, 220/51/77) was able to report that across 14 centres, 1346 meetings and 3536 home visits had been conducted during the previous 12 months and noted:

the more I see of this Pre School parent work in Centres, the more I realise the power of influence we have through the child contact is helping these women to face their present difficulties with optimism. (NAA: A445, 220/51/77)

Conclusion

By the mid-1950s, well-organised, highly standardised and government-supported pre-schools had been established in migrant accommodation centres around Australia. These pre-schools were in direct contrast to the poorly funded and variable system which existed within the general population and migrant children had much greater access to pre-school education than their Australian-born counterparts. Complaints of cramped, communal living conditions, recognition of poor socialisation skills and the lack of English language among migrant children had led immigration authorities to recognise the specific potential benefits that migrant access to pre-schools could

provide, most notably as a tool to assist in rapid assimilation. Their efforts were directly enhanced by the employment of Olga Leschen as Officer in Charge of Pre-School Services for Migrant Centres. In the space of a few years Leschen's dedication and commitment transformed the makeshift, primarily child-minding, facilities to highly organised structured pre-schools which must, in hindsight, be seen as excellent models of best contemporary practice in kindergarten education.

One of the key aims of the pre-school centres was the utilisation of play as a mechanism for overcoming issues of English language proficiency, especially in preparation for ongoing education in mainstream schools, and as a tool to learning Australian ways and customs. Play within the migrant pre-school directly supported the government policy of assimilation. It is recognised that all children learn through play; however, experience in the pre-schools established in the migrant hostels led to a specific emphasis on pre-school play as a tool to meet the assimilationist requirements of the day. As many teachers themselves recognised:

My first term's work at Wacol has been full of valuable experience. Much has been learned from the not too successful method of 'trial and error' technique. However a much wider field of Kindergarten work than usually found in Australian kindergarten lies ahead and necessitates the abandonment of many set rules of kindergarten text books. (NAA: A445, 220/51/20)

This much wider field of work included the extension of education and assimilation into the Australian way of life of pre-school students, parents, and mothers in particular.

Leschen and pre-school teacher reports indicate considerable success, evidenced by the speed at which migrant children within the pre-schools learnt English (NAA: A445, 220/51/17). Certainly better language skills and a general understanding of Australian ways and customs resulted in better preparation for mainstream schooling and it would seem that assimilation aims were at least partially met. However, given the ongoing dialogue and recognition of the difficulties of migrant women, and migrant mothers in particular, in learning English and assimilating it would seem that the secondary aim of educating and assimilating migrant mothers was less successful.

Notes

1. Although British immigrants formed a significant percentage of assisted migrant arrivals in this period these families did not pass through the Reception and Training Centres and Holding Centres which are the topic of this paper. Rather they were housed in Hostels many of which, such as Gepps Cross and Bradfield Park, were British-only hostels. These children did attend hostel pre-schools but were not subjected to the same assimilation policy as European migrants.
2. The term 'New Australian' was first coined by the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, in the late 1940s. Use of the term was encouraged in order to replace the pejorative terms in use such as 'reffo' and 'Balt' and as a symbol of assimilation; however the term itself quickly took on a derogatory meaning.
3. The term 'Australian way of life' coined in the 1940s came into regular use in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular. While never specifically defined the term came to represent the idea of a quintessential Australian, a specific Australian spirit or character with certain ideals and values who celebrated their links to mother England etc. For discussion on this term see for example White (1981). Or for contemporary discussion see Stanner (1953).

4. This notion of the child as the ideal immigrant is paralleled in the promotion and acceptance of a number of child migration schemes which operated pre and post-World War II. See for example Gill (1998).
5. Olga Leschen trained as a pre-school teacher in Western Australia during 1913–1914. She was working in Victoria and was a member of the Kindergarten Union of Victoria when she was seconded by the Department of Immigration to assist Miss Gladys Pendred, Federal Officer of the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development, to survey the makeshift pre-schools which had been established in the migrant centres throughout Australia. Following this survey she was appointed as Officer in Charge of Pre-School Services for Migrant Centres by the Department and held this position for many years.
6. Under Immigration Publicity Officer, H J Murphy's instruction, photographers regularly attended migration centre pre-schools and, across the years, captured thousands of migrant children at play. These photos are held by the National Archives of Australia. While some photos were used for publication in the Pre-school Bulletin, a regular publication distributed to pre-schools across the country, others were strictly public relations photos, such as those taken with children at Bonegilla with a delegation of visiting Dutch journalists in 1953. A large number have been digitised and are available through <http://www.naa.gov.au>.
7. White Australia Policy is the colloquial term used for the Australian 1901 Immigration Restriction Act. The Act effectively controlled the entry of unacceptable (non-white) migrants into Australia through the use of a Dictation Test.
8. See for example NAA: A445, 220/51/7.
9. See for example NAA, 1/1956/22/35.
10. See for example NAA: AA1969/441, 18/2, photo 1 or NAA: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 2.
11. See for example NAA: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 6 or NAA: AA1969/441, 18/2, photo 9.
12. There are a number of photos showing teachers and young children sitting and walking through the open spaces at Woodside Centre. See for example NAA: A12111, 1/1955/22/27.
13. See for example NAA: A12111, 1/1956/22/29.
14. A good example of such events is in the photos within the Wacol Album NAA: AA1969/441, 18/8.
15. See for example NAA: AA1969/441, 19/1, photo 13.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

The research undertaken for this work was supported by the Australian Research Council under Linkage Grant LP120100553 for 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants'.

Notes on contributor

Dr Karen Agutter is an historian with a focus on the history of migration, particularly issues of migrant identity and host society reception, in Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. Karen has published widely in the areas of the migrant experience and has been involved in a variety of interdisciplinary collaborative research projects. She is currently a part of the Hostel Stories Project at the University of Adelaide.

References

- Bostock, J. (1943). *The kindergarten as the foundation for community building in Report of Education Conference Brisbane*. Paper presented at the Education and World Reconstruction, Brisbane.
- Commonwealth Department of Immigration. (1950). *Digest*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Immigration.
- Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council. (1960). *First report on the progress and assimilation of migrant children in Australia*. Canberra: Department of Immigration.
- Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates. (1958, August 14). *Alexander Downer, Minister for Immigration*. Canberra: House of Representatives.
- Cumpston, J. H. L., & Henig, C. M. (1945). *Pre-school centres in Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Health.
- Gill, A. (1998). *Orphans of the empire: The shocking story of child migration to Australia*. Milsons Point, NSW: Vintage.
- Haebich, A. (2008). *Spining the dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press.
- Kokegei, K. (2012). *Australian immigration and migrant assimilation 1945–1960*. PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide.
- Markus, A., & Taft, M. (2015). Postwar immigration and assimilation: A reconceptualisation. *Australian Historical Studies*, 46(2), 234–251.
- Mellor, E. J. (1990). *Stepping stones: The development of early childhood services in Australia*. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Murphy, J. (2000). *Imagining the fifties: Private sentiment and political culture in Menzies' Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press..
- National Archives Australia, A445, 220/51/7, Benalla pre-school play centre, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. A445, 220/51/8, Bonegilla - Pre School Play Centre. Part 2, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. A12111, 1/1956/22/29, Immigration - Hostels, holding centres and state reception centres - BONEGILLA, Reception Centre, pre-school children. Sheep and cattle stud near Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre, VIC, migrant children cluster around Mr John Mitchell to touch a two week old Dorset lamb he is holding [photographic image], Canberra. Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7427951>
- National Archives Australia. 1/1956/22/35, Immigration - Hostels, holding centres and state reception centres - BONEGILLA, Reception Centre, pre-school children. 'Yes my dear, I thought she looked dreadful...' Afternoon tea party in dolls' corner at Bonegilla pre school centre [photographic image], Canberra. Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7427957>
- National Archives Australia. A12111, 1/1955/22/27, Immigration - Hostels, holding centres and state reception centres - WOODSIDE, Migrant Centre, South Australia, pre-school children [photographic image], Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7427886>
- National Archives Australia. A12111, 1/1956/22/37, Immigration - Hostels, holding centres and state reception centres - BONEGILLA, Reception Centre, pre-school children. Teacher Miss I Ryan chats with migrant mother [photographic image], Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 18/12, [Maps and other information about where play centre are located in immigration centres], Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. MP275/1, 1953/1067, Migrant assimilation - English language courses, Melbourne.
- National Archives Australia. K279, 1948/979 Part 2, Migrant workers' hostels - general [Australian Construction Services] [Part 2], Perth.
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 18/2, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Sale, Victoria - Guessing English names out of a box - photo 1, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488118>

- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 18/2, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Sale, Victoria - manipulative material - photo 9, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488126>
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 19/1, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - As much time is spent out of doors as indoors - photo 12, Canberra, Accessable at <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488140>
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 19/1, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - clay - adequate quantity for free expression - photo 6, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488134>
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 19/1, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - Discussion group - subject 'The Persian Kitten' - photo 2, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488130>
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 19/1, Photograph Album - Pre-school Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - Improvised toilet and wash room - good hygiene habits are encouraged in the Play Centre - photo 13, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7488141>
- National Archives Australia. AA1969/441, 18/8, Photograph Album. Pre-school play centre, Immigration Centre, Wacol, Queensland, Canberra, Retrieved from <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=1812850&T=PDF>
- National Archives Australia. A445, 220/51/77, Pre-school centres - supervisory reports, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. A445, 220/51/17, Scheyville - pre-school play centre, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. A445, 220/51/20, Wacol - pre-school play centre, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia. A445, 220/51/22, Woodside pre-school play centre, Canberra.
- Pendred, G. E. (1964). Pre-school centres in Australia. In *Review of education in Australia 1955–1962* (pp. 387–416). Hawthorn, VIC: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Spearritt, P. (1979). Child care and kindergartens in Australia, 1890–1975. In P. Langford, & P. Sebastian (Eds.), *Early childhood education and care in Australia* (pp. 10–38). Kew, VIC: Australia International Press.
- Stanner, W. E. H. (1953). The Australian way of life. In W. V. Aughterson (Ed.), *Taking stock: Aspects of mid-century life in Australia* (pp. 3–14). Melbourne: F W Cheshire.
- The West Australian. (1951, September 28). Play centres at camps for migrants. *The West Australian*, p. 10.
- White, R. (1981). *Inventing Australia: Images and identity 1688–1980*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Chapter 6 *Mobilising the Public: The Role of Volunteer Organizations and the Church in Aiding Assimilation*



Figure 5 : Toc H Camp for Girls (1956) – girls from Woodside Migrant Hostel, Point Pearce Aboriginal Mission and “underprivileged families”

Toc H Archives, Adelaide.

6.1 Introduction

In February 1949, Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell told the Australian people that:

No language or civics classes, no official welfare programme, indispensable though these undoubtedly are, can supply the need for personal friendship, neighbourly companionship, community of cultural interests, and mateyness on the job. Therefore in our assimilation policy, the highest value is placed on voluntary community effort. Every endeavour will be made to enlist the co-operation of churches, societies, clubs and other voluntary organisations ... Once a newcomer feels he has even one real Australian friend at whose home he is welcome and to whom he can turn for advice and help, his whole attitude changes.²⁵⁶

Volunteers were essential to the settlement and assimilation of new arrivals for a number of reasons. First, and perhaps foremost, was the already discussed belief that the Australian public needed to be conditioned to the acceptance of the immigration program. There was also an idea that by being actively involved, Australians would feel a civic responsibility, and that they had an important role in welcoming the new arrivals and exhibiting the Australian value of good neighbourliness and friendliness. The second reason for the call for a volunteer army to aid in assimilation was the lack of sufficient government resources and finances. As Calwell outlined in a letter to the Tasmanian Minister for Health and Social Services in November 1949, '[y]our Director-General of Social Services is under a misapprehension if he believes that we contemplate the use

²⁵⁶ Calwell, A. in *Tomorrow's Australians*, Volume 11, 14 Feb 1949, p 1.

of paid staff for work which will be undertaken by such bodies as the Country Women's Association, New Settlers' League, Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A'.²⁵⁷ In the event, the government did fund the establishment of a small group of social workers to assist in settlement and assimilation activities as well as allocating money for the coordination of volunteer organisations through the Good Neighbour Movement.

6.2 *The Social Welfare Section*

The Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section was formed as a branch of the Aliens Assimilation Division in 1949. In a letter to the Minister for Health and Social Services, Calwell, recognising the fact that DPs had 'no one to break down for them the first barriers of life in a strange country with its different language and customs', recommended that case-work for the personal and family problems experienced by refugees should be undertaken by social workers 'functioning as an integral part' of the DOI.²⁵⁸ Although the aim was to employ thirty seven, mainly female, social workers who would be, as Ann-Mari Jordens argues, 'the human face of the government's assimilation policy', that target number was never met.²⁵⁹ Consequently, the ratio between social workers and migrants was always very high and caseloads were large and covered a diverse range of issues as social workers worked within the community, in remote areas to which migrants were sent, and in the accommodation centres,

²⁵⁷ Calwell to Senator McKenna 7 November 1949 in National Archives Australia; A438, 1949/7/1510.

²⁵⁸ Calwell to Senator McKenna 7 November 1949 in National Archives Australia; A438, 1949/7/1510.

²⁵⁹ Jordens, A.-M., *Alien to Citizen*, p 32. For a fuller description of the casework of the Department Social Workers see also Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012.

especially the Holding Centres. However, as their job descriptions indicate, the social worker role was more complex than that of just providing social welfare. Although Hazel Dobson and her staff were primarily charged with the task of handling the personal and family problems of the DPs in the centres, a second key area of their work was assimilation and the education of the Australian public. Through interaction with voluntary organisations, talks, radio interviews, record keeping, reporting and ongoing research, they were expected to contribute to informing the Australian public about non-British migrants and combating racial prejudice.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, social workers at all levels were expected to enlist ‘the sympathy and practical assistance of Churches and voluntary organisations’ to see that ‘all aliens have as much contact with Australians as possible’.²⁶¹ To assist in this, social work sections created long lists of community facilities and voluntary bodies, including ethnic groups and organisations, to work, unpaid, on migrant settlement and assimilation. In a way, a key role of the social worker was to act as a referral agent to enlist the help of volunteer organisations and churches within the broader community.

6.3 *The Good Neighbour Movement*

Working in a similar role providing settlement assistance and promoting assimilation was the Good Neighbour Movement (GNM), a coordinated collection of mainly state-based organisations that went by names such as the

²⁶⁰ Heyes, Duties of Social Workers, 29 June 1949 in National Archives Australia: A438, 1950/7/387; Conference on Duties of Social Workers.

²⁶¹ Heyes, Duties of Social Workers, 29 June 1949 in National Archives Australia: A438, 1950/7/387.

Good Neighbour Council or the New Settlers League.²⁶² Modelled on the 1920s New Settler's Leagues, its primary objective, as stated in the GNM Handbook, was to assist in the 'satisfactory assimilation of every migrant into the national family'.²⁶³ Their primary mission was, as Sara Wills argues, to market 'a set of values and a mode of living imagined as distinctly Australian'.²⁶⁴

Provided with limited government funding the GNM was not a 'functional organisation', but rather a

co-ordinated effort of churches and other bodies which, while retaining their autonomy and freedom of action, ... voluntarily formed themselves into Co-ordinating Councils whereby they can readily and conveniently co-operate with each other and with governments and other agencies in honorary work to assist in the assimilation of migrants.²⁶⁵

This umbrella organisation has been the main focus of scholarly interest related to the assimilation of new arrivals, with most studies either critical of the role the GNM played, or at best conciliatory, arguing, as James Jupp has, that '[a]ny form of assistance is better than none'.²⁶⁶ Many scholars have argued that the majority of the members of the GNM were middle-class Australians who, exemplifying white Anglo cultural norms, advanced government propaganda and ultimately failed in both their assigned role of assimilation and in

²⁶² Please note I shall use the term Good Neighbour Movement (GNM) to collectively refer to the organisation which was actually called the Good Neighbour Council in some states, and the New Settlers League in others.

²⁶³ Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *A Handbook of the Good Neighbour Movement in National Archives Australia*: J25, 1961/9500; 1) Assimilation - 2) New Settlers League - 3) General Policy.

²⁶⁴ Wills, S., 'When Good Neighbours Become Good Friends', p 343.

²⁶⁵ Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *A Handbook of the Good Neighbour Movement in National Archives Australia*: J25, 1961/9500.

²⁶⁶ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, p 149.

recognising migrant needs.²⁶⁷ Milanov is even more critical, claiming that the GNM's work with non-English speaking migrants was 'frivolous, superficial and unrealistic'.²⁶⁸ Certainly Jupp believes that the members' white middle-class origins greatly influenced their activities and the choice of migrants to whom they offered service²⁶⁹ as evidenced by the existence of the so-called "British Committee" of the South Australian Good Neighbour Council that dealt only with British migrants.²⁷⁰

However, as Kokegei and Martin note, there was variation in the work of GNMs in different areas and, in South Australia, for example, many members of the Council were quicker to recognise the potential of ethnic organisations in promoting assimilation and quicker to push for the inclusion of migrant representatives within the council.²⁷¹ Ruth Ribechi's thesis on the Victorian GNM is similarly critical of the previous 'unsympathetic' examination of the organisation through the lens of multiculturalism, which she describes as 'not only superficial but a travesty of the role the Good Neighbour Movement was asked to undertake'.²⁷² An earlier examination by Lee Ardlie, argues that the GNM

was in fact instrumental in producing ... the change in public opinion and the policy makers, from "all out" Australianisation of the migrant

²⁶⁷ Mc Master, D., *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Victoria, 2001, p 47. Jenkins, P.A.B., *Australian Political Elites*.

²⁶⁸ Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians'.

²⁶⁹ Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, pp 148-51.

²⁷⁰ See for example State Library of South Australia: SRG, 703/14/2; Meeting Minutes 1961-66.

²⁷¹ Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, Martin, J.I., *Community and Identity*, p 103.

²⁷² Ribechi, R., *Just "A Handshake and a Cup of Tea"?: The Good Neighbour Movement in Victoria 1950-1959*, Masters Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986.

to that of the fusion of the races - the two-way process of the melting pot.²⁷³

This point is further supported by Gwenda Tavan's argument that, when challenged, GNMs easily 'abandoned the monocultural model of the nation'.²⁷⁴

The role of the GNM will undoubtedly continue to be debated, as it has been of interest from its inception and continues to be, particularly as part of the wider retro-assimilationist discussion.²⁷⁵ However, in this thesis, I am more concerned with the role of the individual organisations that sat beneath the umbrella of the Good Neighbour Movement. With the exception of Melanie Oppenheimer's interpretation of the GNM as evidence of the importance of volunteers and voluntary organisations working together with the government, and her recognition of some of the major organisations involved, little consideration has been given to the role of other voluntary bodies who played major roles in the government's assimilation policy.²⁷⁶ Given the focus of this thesis, I now consider how the GNM and other groups, including churches and voluntary organisations, interpreted and enabled the policy of assimilation in the migrant accommodation centres.

²⁷³ Ardlie, L.E., *Australianization to Melting Pot : A Study of the Work of the South Australian Good Neighbour Council*, Honours Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1967, p 82.

²⁷⁴ Tavan, G., 'Good neighbours': Community organisations, migrant assimilation and Australian society and culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, p 89.

²⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that a new branch of the Good Neighbour Council was established in 2011 at the Inverbrackie Migrant Centre in South Australia. Like the GNM of the 1950s their mission statement reflected a desire to 'extend the hand of good neighbourly relations' and to encourage interaction between Australians and migrants through organised events and activities. Inverbrackie Good Neighbour Council, *Inverbrackie Good Neighbour Council*, Accessed 16 March 2011, www.inverbrackiegnc.org.au.

²⁷⁶ Oppenheimer, M., *Volunteering: Why we can't survive without it*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008, p 73.

The government's and GNM's call for volunteers was seemingly met with a strong response and the concept was obviously appealing to many people. By 1953, in South Australia for example, there were over 70 volunteers working within the GNM charged with meeting all new arrivals to the State. Nationally there were more than 100 GNM branches with over 10,000 members directly involved in their operation.²⁷⁷

For the GNM, actively making contact with all new arrivals was considered extremely important both in terms of a proper welcome but also as a point of introduction and contact with Australian society. To this end, in January 1950, it was determined that the formation of Good Neighbour Committees in towns adjacent to accommodation centres in South Australia was urgent, and local people and organisations were contacted to elicit their cooperation.²⁷⁸ Within the accommodation centres this initial welcome, often through a morning tea, was followed by invitations to various events and activities including film showings, guest lectures and information sessions highlighting the Australian way of life. Various "fun" activities, such as craft and sewing groups and whist drives, promoted contact and the learning of English. Volunteers would take new arrivals for drives to familiarise them with the local area. Christmas gave added incentive to assist.²⁷⁹ In South Australia in 1950, for example, 90 newly arrived families, 80 of whom were Europeans, were hosted for Christmas lunch

²⁷⁷ National Archives Australia: D400, SA1956/8959; Assimilation General Monthly Reports.

²⁷⁸ Good Neighbour Council of South Australia: SRG 703/1; Minutes 11 Jan 1950

²⁷⁹ For examples of the activities undertaken by the GNM in the accommodation centres see the reports supplied by various local branches to the Regional and National Conferences. See for example National Archives Australia: A445 112/3/42 Good Neighbour Movement - Regional Conferences 1954 and National Archives Australia: A438 1950/7/720; Good Neighbour Councils and New Settlers Leagues - Conference - Brisbane - 15-16th September, 1950.

by South Australian families.²⁸⁰ Although the GNM was active within the migrant accommodation centres, it was the over 100 affiliated organisations which carried a significant percentage of the work with new arrivals. These individual organisations received little financial assistance outside of some government concessions such as accommodation where required in the centres themselves and some help with travel to enable them to perform migrant welfare work.²⁸¹ Representatives of these organisations were invited to the Annual Citizenship Conventions which were important in keeping them informed about the wider national migration program and the work of other associations. They also played an important part in motivating individual volunteer groups, in rewarding them for their efforts and in making them feel a part of the larger movement. Organisations often published long reports from their representatives in their newsletters to inform and encourage members to keep up the good work. Irene Fairbairn, Chief Commissioner of Guides, for example, reporting on the 1953 Annual Citizenship Convention noted that ‘many delegates came up and thanked me for all the good work the Girl Guides are doing in helping the New Australians. That is, of course, all of you!’²⁸²

6.4 *Community Organisations*

It is impossible to consider all of the organisations that worked with migrants within the accommodation centres, so in this section I consider a sample of the most significantly involved bodies to illustrate the types of interactions that occurred.

²⁸⁰ Good Neighbour Council of South Australia: SRG 703/1; Minutes 18 Jan 1950

²⁸¹ National Archives Australia; A1838, 862/24/1.

²⁸² Fairbairn, I., 'Australian Citizenship Convention' in *Adventuring*, Volume 15, Number 9, 1953, available at Australian Red Cross Archive Centre, North Melbourne.

The organisations most heavily involved in a variety of welfare and assimilation work in the accommodation centres were the Red Cross, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Like the scouts and guides (discussed below), the fact that these organisations were already well known to the migrants went a long way to aiding their work. Oppenheimer notes that migrants had 'positive experiences with Red Cross during the war and brought that with them to their new homeland'.²⁸³ Like their work in the wider international community, the Red Cross work within the centres was often focussed around aiding in the reunion of families and in providing emergency provisions, such as clothing, on arrival.²⁸⁴ The Junior Red Cross was also active in working with centre children especially in distributing donated toys and in holding Christmas parties.²⁸⁵ However, Red Cross groups were also instrumental in encouraging migrants resident in accommodation centres to go out into the wider community, and in particular to Red Cross institutions such as the Junior Red Cross Home for Convalescent Children to perform traditional songs and dances.²⁸⁶ Interestingly, the annual Red Cross Friendship Festivals brought together Australians, Indigenous Australians, European and British Migrants to highlight the

²⁸³ Oppenheimer, M., *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of the Australian Red Cross 1914-2014*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2014, p 134.

²⁸⁴ See for example The Australian Red Cross Society, *Annual Report*, Australian Red Cross, Adelaide, 1949-50, available at Australian Red Cross Archive Centre, North Melbourne.

²⁸⁵ The Australian Red Cross Society, *Annual Report*, Australian Red Cross, Adelaide, 1951-52, available at Australian Red Cross Archive Centre, North Melbourne.

²⁸⁶ The Australian Red Cross Society, *Annual Report*, Australian Red Cross, Adelaide, 1949-50, available at Australian Red Cross Archive Centre, North Melbourne.

international character of the organisation, and in so doing extended the aim of “mixing” even beyond that which was encouraged by authorities.²⁸⁷

From the beginning of the mass migration scheme, the YWCA was ‘anxious to help in any way we can to make the reception of migrants coming to this country as pleasant a one as possible, and to foster good-will and understanding towards them’.²⁸⁸ In order to assist in their work they appointed a trained social worker, Miss Carruthers, as Secretary for Immigration, and immediately sent her to Europe to tour the resettlement centres and familiarise herself with the migrants with whom the YWCA would work in the future.²⁸⁹ Following her return the YWCA began an active campaign of assistance for migrants, establishing “Huts” in the various centres and requesting accommodation, messing and other assistance for Y workers who would be organising activities including the establishment of clubs, provision of lectures and English classes, organised outings and so on.²⁹⁰ The DOI saw the YWCA (and YMCA) involvement in the centres as advantageous to the assimilation and welfare of new arrivals, providing suitable huts in all centres and organised for travel warrants, use of transport and various other facilities to aid their work.²⁹¹ However, the Department was reluctant to provide other financial assistance arguing that, while they were very pleased with the good work being done to

²⁸⁷ For a good description of this festival see The Australian Red Cross Society, *Annual Report*, Australian Red Cross, Adelaide, 1957-58, available at Australian Red Cross Archive Centre, North Melbourne.

²⁸⁸ YWCA to Minister for Immigration May 1948 National Archives Australia: A442, 1951/14/5144 YWCA of Australia - Immigration inquiries of activities [3cms].

²⁸⁹ YWCA to Minister for Immigration May 1948 National Archives Australia; A442, 1951/14/5144.

²⁹⁰ YWCA to Minister for Immigration May 1948 National Archives Australia; A442, 1951/14/5144.

²⁹¹ YWCA to Minister for Immigration May 1948 National Archives Australia; A442, 1951/14/5144.

assimilate migrants, funding to the Y would set a precedent for funding for other organisations.²⁹²

The Y rooms within accommodation centres became a welcome, often brightly coloured and well-furnished haven, for migrant women, girls and boys, where, as one Western Australian report indicated, they could obtain information, sew and do handicrafts, learn about Australia and unburden themselves 'of old griefs, stories of tragic hardships and privations, of cruelties and losses'.²⁹³ Similarly, in May 1951, the social worker at Uranquinty Holding Centre reported that the

YWCA room is giving excellent service to The Centre and each week is an organised evening of community singing and games as well as the informal gatherings round the fire. A discussion group is being formed and there is the nucleus of a play reading group. During the day the room is well used and the sewing machines are certainly an asset to The Centre.²⁹⁴

Reports from other centres indicate the popularity of the Y huts; for example at Bonegilla in 1952, the Y hut regularly had an attendance of over 300 migrants per day and at Woodside around 100 women and 50 children of many nationalities regularly attended the Y's afternoon tea and games sessions.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Holt, Minister for Immigration to President YWCA, 22 August 1951 in National Archives Australia: A445, 220/11/1 Activities of YWCA in Migrant Centres.

²⁹³ YWCA to Minister for Immigration May 1948 National Archives Australia; A442, 1951/14/5144.

²⁹⁴ M. MacLean, Social Worker Monthly Report, Uranquinty, May 1951 in National Archives Australia: A437, 1949/6/385; Social Worker's Report, Uranquinty Centre, NSW.

²⁹⁵ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/11/2; Quarterly Regional Conferences - YWCA.

The YMCA similarly looked to extend the work they undertook in the wider community to welfare and Australianisation of new arrivals.²⁹⁶ Like the YWCA, they opened well frequented Huts in the centres for the purposes of conducting classes and providing a places for migrants to congregate.²⁹⁷ The stated objective of the YMCA, 'training to citizenship', would have resonated well with the authorities.²⁹⁸

Many groups were limited by their organisational mandates in the breadth of assimilation activities that they could undertake. For example, the Workers' Educational Association limited their involvement to giving lectures in the centres. They produced a series of 10 lectures entitled *Introduction to Australia*, covering topics including geography, the economy, employment opportunities, literature, government, political parties, education, theatre, voluntary organisations and Australia in the Commonwealth. Although the lectures were given in English, written notes translated into German were supplied.²⁹⁹ Similarly, the Returned and Services League generally limited their assistance to ex-servicemen from Europe, in particular Polish ex-servicemen living in workers camps in various areas such as Port Lincoln³⁰⁰ or as part of the hydro-electric scheme in Tasmania.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Massey, National Secretary YMCA to Calwell 20 December 1947 National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/1573; Young Men's Christian Association - Offer of Assistance in migrant centres.

²⁹⁷ Massey, National Secretary YMCA to Calwell 20 December 1947 National Archives Australia; A434, 1950/3/1573.

²⁹⁸ National Archives Australia; A434, 1950/3/1573.

²⁹⁹ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, NSW, 5 November 1949, 'W.E.A. Courses On Australia At Greta Camp', p 2.

³⁰⁰ National Archives Australia: D1917, D47/47 Part 3; DP Scheme Instructions Part 3.

³⁰¹ National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 021.188 PART 3; Immigration - 'The New Australian' [newspaper for new migrants] - Part 3.

Community service organisations such as Lions, Rotary and Apex were also willingly involved in the assimilation of new arrivals primarily through raising money to assist in sending children on outings or providing equipment for their use in the camps.³⁰² Social workers were often instrumental in getting these organisations involved by speaking at their meetings about the importance of interaction with Australians for assimilation.³⁰³

Some groups, such as the Police Boys' Clubs, worked only with children and in a limited number of centres, including the Benalla Holding Centre where they were particularly welcomed in providing activities for boys whose fathers were working in distant locations. Many of their activities, such as boxing, were particularly appealing to these migrant boys, and the formation of competitive teams also promoted mixing with Australians. In Harvey, Western Australia, it was noted that, following competitions organised by the Police Boys' Club, many of the boys 'were invited back to spend the summer vacation with their hosts'.³⁰⁴

Children were also the focus for many women's associations such as the Women's Agricultural Bureau that, like the Country Women's Association (CWA), ran programs to place children from migrant centres in country homes for summer holidays. As South Australian organiser, Miss Marshall stated, '[a]ny country women who will give these children a holiday in their homes will

³⁰² See for example the details of a large jumble sale, proceeds of which went to 'amenities and instructive entertainment for children at the Cowra Centre' in *The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser*, NSW, 15 December 1949, 'Grenfell Rotary Club', p 1.

³⁰³ National Archives Australia; A437, 1949/6/385.

³⁰⁴ Youth Club Assists Assimilation, no author, n.d. in National Archives Australia: K403, W59/829; [Immigration Department, migrants] Assimilation - welfare work - country areas.

be giving them not only a holiday but a much better idea of the Australian way of life than they can possibly learn in a hostel'.³⁰⁵ Similarly, at the Uranquinty Centre near Wagga, the CWA made weekly visits to the centre to invite migrant children into their homes for weekends and sometimes the whole week, both relieving the monotony of Holding Centre life and also giving them a taste of normal Australian family life.³⁰⁶

Two particular groups who worked with the children of the centres were the Scouts and the Guides. These groups had the added advantage of already being known to many European migrant families. Guide and Scout groups believed that early contact within the centres would result in prolonged participation once the families had settled in the community.³⁰⁷ In fact, many of these children and their parents went on to form ethnically-based Guide and Scout packs, and the concerts and other activities that they held promoted migrant mixing and broader Australian society education.³⁰⁸ Guides also promoted "Good Neighbourliness" by encouraging Australian Girl Guides to invite a migrant child into their home and suggesting that parents should be encouraged to meet migrant parents.³⁰⁹ Guide and Scout camps also provided important opportunities for assimilation activities and, to assist with financing migrant participation, they often enlisted the help of other organisations such as Rotary or Apex.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ *Northern Argus*, Clare SA, 24 November 1954, 'Holiday Scheme for Migrant Children', p 9.

³⁰⁶ National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/1; Senior social workers annual reports - all states.

³⁰⁷ National Archives Australia; A437, 1949/6/385.

³⁰⁸ *The News*, Adelaide, 24 August 1955, 'Latvian Scouts, Guides hold annual concert', n.p.

³⁰⁹ Girl Guides Association of South Australia, *Annual Report*, 1954 Girl Guides Archives, Norwood, South Australia.

³¹⁰ National Archives Australia; A437, 1949/6/385.



Figure 6: Migrant Guides at Woodside Centre South Australia.

Girl Guide Archives, Norwood

6.5 *The Role of the Church*

The ideals of the Australian way of life, the very backbone of the assimilationist policy of the period, were also, as David Hilliard explains, an essential theme of the religious culture of Australia at the time, namely ‘the association between personal faith, divinely sanctioned moral values and a stable social order’.³¹¹ Religious leaders therefore readily agreed that the Church had a vital role to play in the settlement and moral and religious welfare of new arrivals, especially as engaging in acts of charity and helping those in need are essential

³¹¹ Hilliard, D., ‘God in the suburbs: The religious culture of Australian cities in the 1950s’ in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 24, Number 97, 1991, p 411.

parts of Christian scripture and doctrine.³¹² In post-war Australia, churches were both confident of their role and expansionist in their outlook.³¹³

In response to Australia's post-war mass migration program, churches established immigration committees that were either denominational, such as the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, or collective in the case of the Inter-Church Migration Committee, which was a united body representing the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Churches of Christ, the Congregational Church and the Salvation Army. This move was supported by Tasman Heyes, Secretary of the DOI, who commented that they would be 'useful adjuncts to our migration machine'.³¹⁴ Although chaplaincy services were generally provided on board migrant ships,³¹⁵ it was on the ground in Australia, and especially in accommodation centres, that the churches were seen as being the most beneficial to assimilation and migrant welfare. The importance ascribed to having a Church presence in the accommodation centres is evidenced in archival documents which outline the requirement to allocate buildings to be used as chapels as part of the establishment of each centre. In some large centres, including Bonegilla and

³¹² Cox, D.R., *Migration and Welfare An Australian Perspective*, Prentice Hall, New York, 1987, p 76.

³¹³ Hilliard, D., 'Popular Religion in Australia in the 1950s: A Study of Adelaide and Brisbane' in *The Journal of Religious History*, Volume 16, Number 2, 1988.

³¹⁴ Heyes to Commonwealth Migration Officer, 13 February 1937 in National Archives Australia: A436, 1949/5/95; Federal Interchurch Migration Committee - RE Migration.

³¹⁵ The chaplain either travelled internally from Fremantle, or in the case of many British migrant ships, from England itself. There is also evidence of Chaplains on some ships from Europe when, for example, Pastor Stolz who serviced the Gawler Hostel and surrounding areas was absent from May until September as he was acting as Chaplain aboard the *Skaugum*. See *Bunyip*, Gawler, 27 May 1955, 'Pastor as Chaplin on Migrant Ship', p 10. In line with Australia's lack of an established church and the notion of religious equality Chaplaincy positions were allocated under strict numerical criteria according to the denominations represented on the passenger lists and the total number of passengers on board, so that a ship carrying between 250 and 500 persons was allocated two clergymen and those carrying over 500 souls four clergymen. See National Archives Australia; A436, 1949/5/95.

Woodside, several huts were converted into chapels for services by different denominations.³¹⁶



Figure 7: Huts used as Churches on “Church Row” at Woodside Centre

NAA: D3481, Woodside.

While buildings in some centres were permanently allocated for religious practice, such as the Catholic Church at the Wacol Holding Centre where migrants remember ‘the doors were always open’,³¹⁷ in other centres services were given on a rotating basis with the buildings often used for other purposes

³¹⁶ Department of Environment and Water Resources, *National Heritage List: Bonegilla Migrant Camp - Block 19*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/7aa61b01-135d-4d1f-bd8e-fe939bb92818/files/bonegilla.pdf> Accessed 1 January 2017.

³¹⁷ OH24 -1, "Interview with Christa Braun, Interviewer Donna Kleiss, 28/11/91 and 30/6/92, John Oxley Library Queensland."

during the week or even between services.³¹⁸ Where chaplains resided in centres, board and lodging was provided, and various other concessions, such as a petrol allowance, were available and there was also no restriction on the conduct of services in foreign languages in order to encourage migrant attendance.³¹⁹

As the migrant accommodation system evolved and the immediacy of the DP situation was replaced with a more steady flow of assisted passage migrants, the nature and administration of hostels changed. While R&T centres, and some work camps continued to be administrated by the Migrant Workers Accommodation Division (DLNS), the task of managing the remaining and particularly the newer purpose-built hostels was transferred to Commonwealth Hostels Limited (a Commonwealth-owned company registered in Victoria) beginning in January 1952. As many of these centres, such as Finsbury and Glenelg in South Australia, were situated within industrial and suburban areas. William Funnell, the Chairman of Directors of Commonwealth Hostels Limited, determined that

in order to assist with the process of migrant assimilation, the Company's instructions to Hostel managers provide that, wherever possible, attendance at local Churches is to be encouraged. Where there is not a local Church within a reasonable distance, endeavour is

³¹⁸ National Archives Australia: D618, IM6 PART 1; Department of Immigration] - Woodside SA camp conversion of areas for displaced persons.

³¹⁹ Notes Supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration Canberra in Response to U.N.E.S.C.O. Questionnaire CL/635 April 1952 in National Archives Australia; A1838, 862/24/1.

made to provide facilities within the hostel, but the available accommodation is mostly very limited.³²⁰

Thus it is clear that the government and the operators of the various centres believed that the Church had an important role to play in the assimilation of newly arrived migrants; but what did the churches actually do and how can we assess their success in this role?

Although many scholars agree that religion was central to the lives of many migrants in this period,³²¹ there is a lack of consensus as to the success of the Church in this facilitating role. David Cox, for example, contends that while there is evidence that religion provided a sense of order and meaning, helping migrants to overcome the differences between the old and the new and aiding in the uptake of the customs and expectations of the host society, the Church, through binding its practitioners in a strong insular community also had an anti-assimilatory impact.³²²

Contemporary records indicate that the work of churches in the context of accommodation centres was multi-faceted and, like the centres themselves, evolved over time. Obviously the spiritual-wellbeing of new arrivals was at the forefront of their work; however, clergymen were often called upon for help with the new settlers' wider welfare issues especially in relation to marital and familial problems, so often exacerbated by the trauma of the migration

³²⁰ Funnell to A.L. Nutt, 9 August 1957 in National Archives Australia: C3076, N5/1/12; Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - NSW - Religious Services and Church Welfare Committees [Box 701].

³²¹ See for example Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia*.

³²² Cox, D.R., *Migration and Welfare*, pp 73-75.

experience itself. In line with the Government expectation of the Church's role in the assimilation of new arrivals, there was an expectation that church groups, especially women's groups, would both engage with new arrivals in the centre, but also extend this engagement into the wider community by taking migrants into their homes, into their organised activities such as children's holiday camps, and into the churches within the community with the ultimate aim of Australianisation.

DOI social workers frequently reported on the work of church women's groups in the centres describing the regularly-held gatherings, generally around afternoon tea, for migrant women and their children.³²³ This assimilation work was also carried out by Christian organisations such as Toc H which was very active in South Australia and regularly took migrant groups from the hostels for an afternoon drive, for a picnic in the hills or to the beach in order to provide some relief from life in the centre. These outings also allowed them to familiarise migrants with Australian pastimes, and of course to engage them in learning the English language.³²⁴ They also included New Australian children from the centres in their annual summer camps (see Figure 5) at Victor Harbour³²⁵ often funding this through another service to migrants, namely the monthly trading tables held at centres where goods such as children's clothing, homemade cakes and flowers were sold at a nominal price. Toc H Women's Association reports indicated this service was welcomed by the residents and profits went to fund migrant activities, especially the children's camps. Stalls

³²³ National Archives Australia; A437, 1949/6/385.

³²⁴ Toc H South Australia; Annual Report (Secretary) 1952.

³²⁵ Toc H South Australia; Annual Report (Secretary) 1952.

were followed by the quintessential cup of tea and a chat with the migrants who they said were 'very lonely and are not familiar with their new surroundings'.³²⁶

The commitment that church groups made to the migrants living in the accommodation centres is evidenced in various church newspapers which called on their congregations to make a difference in the lives of New Australians. The *Adelaide Church Guardian*, for example, asked their parishioners to consider the newcomers who had been herded together in camps of galvanised huts and

for five years or more have never been inside a home. They have never sat in an arm-chair and heard the prattle of children. There is one thing we all can do. We can ask a newcomer to visit us, and let him share the radiance of homelife, even if only for an hour or two.³²⁷

The situation in the centres is also highlighted in the *Lutheran Herald* which called on Lutherans to find room in their homes for migrants currently in hostels but 'keen to enjoy family life'.³²⁸

Women, particularly unmarried mothers and widows, dominated the social work case load in the accommodation centres and the churches were regularly called on to help. Finding work for women with children was particularly difficult; however, work was considered essential, both in terms of the required work contract, and also if they were to eventually assimilate and take their place in the community. Religious organisations were regularly called upon to help to

³²⁶ Toc H South Australia; Women's Association Monthly Newsheet - August 1967.

³²⁷ *The Adelaide Church Guardian*, Adelaide, 1 August 1951, 'The Church and the New Australians', pp 5-6.

³²⁸ *Lutheran Herald*, South Australia, 16 September 1950, 'Snaps from the Lutheran City Mission and Migrant Work', p 293.

find employment and accommodation for widows and their children.³²⁹ Many denominations turned to their congregations publishing long editorials or advertisements requesting help, usually appealing to them as Christians or offering them the chance to support Australia's ongoing humanitarian work. In July 1950, for example, the *Catholic Weekly* reported on the situation, stating that there were 773 widows and 1077 children currently in hostels needing homes and work:

Most of these women have pathetic stories. After the war, during which they lost their husbands, they drifted from camp to camp and country to country in Europe...Already Australia has made a humanitarian and Christian contribution to the problem in accepting some of these widows and children as immigrants. However, because of their children it was not possible for the women to take normal employment and arrangements were made for them to work in the centres as kitchen maids etc. in order that they might be near their children. However, to assist in their complete rehabilitation the department desires to find them other accommodation.³³⁰

Finally, it is important to remember that assimilation was always considered to be a two-way policy in that while migrants had to adapt to the Australian way of life, Australians were encouraged to learn about the new arrivals and the Church also had a role to play in this process. The performance of ceremonies, particularly marriage ceremonies, in makeshift hostel chapels were not

³²⁹ National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/27104; Widows with Dependent Children at Immigration Centres- Employment and Accommodation.

³³⁰ Article reproduced in National Archives Australia; A434, 1950/3/27104.

uncommon and often reported in local newspapers as a sign of commitment to family life in Australia and the beginnings of assimilation especially highlighting the ceremonies conducted in English.³³¹ Church groups regularly organised for migrants to speak at their meetings and at public events in order that those listening could learn ‘something of the problems facing migrants today’.³³² Similarly social events, such as the Baptist Church picnic at Yarragundry in NSW, encouraged migrant children from the local centre to swim in the river and play Australian games, and then incorporated a concert where the migrants performed folk dances and sang national songs in an effort at cultural exchange.³³³

6.6 *Effectiveness*

So what did the work of volunteer organisations and churches mean for the migrants in the centres and what did it achieve in regard to the assimilationist agenda of the times? While the work of many of these organisations was appreciated by the migrants, mainly for providing relief from the tedium and often depressing atmosphere of the centres, hundreds of migrants never joined in. Social work reports indicate a level of frustration with the lack of coordination among the organisations arguing that, despite the stated role of the GNM, the work in some centres seems to be carried on independently with

³³¹ See for example the marriage of nine couples at the Lutheran Chapel at the Bathurst Centre in front of a crowd of 500, where, according to the newspaper, the vows were read in English, then in German. *Singleton Argus*, NSW, 24 May 1948, 'Migrants Team Up', p 1.

³³² Toc H South Australia; Adelaide Branch Report for Year Ending 30 September 1955.

³³³ Morris, S., *Uranquinty Remembers: A Migrant Experience 1848-1952*, Uranquinty Progress Association, Wagga Wagga, 2001, p 133.

‘little knowledge on the part of one group of what is being done by another’.³³⁴ In another report, a social worker asked why organisations such as Apex and Lions ‘have not concentrated on assisting residents in hostel to leave [sic] them instead of promoting fresh migration’.³³⁵ In Uranquinty, the CWA was accused of being ‘indifferent and also perhaps prejudiced against new settlers’ as although the CWA was a large and influential group in Wagga, there was, she claimed, a mixed reaction to helping New Australians: ‘Some members are sympathetic others not so. They insist on those visiting their meetings having a good knowledge of English’.³³⁶

Frustration with the lack of migrant participation was also expressed, so that for example Farmers Clubs complained that the activities they had tried to hold had met with little success and the Commonwealth Migration Officer in Perth commented that this had completely dampened their enthusiasm to help.³³⁷ Certainly as one New South Wales social worker reported, there was some suspicion on behalf of some of the migrants and for others a belief that as the government brought them to Australia it was the government that should be responsible for helping them.³³⁸

³³⁴ Report on Bradfield Park British Migrant Hostel and its Relationship to the Community, Department Social Work, University of Sydney, 1957 in National Archives Australia; C3076, 5/1/4 CENTRAL.

³³⁵ B. Thorpe Social Worker, Annual Report July 1958-June 1959 in National Archives Australia; C3076, 5/1/4 CENTRAL.

³³⁶ P. Sanders Social Worker, Uranquinty Progress Report, 3 June 1960 in National Archives Australia; A437, 1949/6/385.

³³⁷ Commonwealth Migration Officer Perth, Report to Commonwealth Migration Officer Canberra 6 May 1953 in National Archives Australia: A446, 1962/65689; Assimilation Activities State Branches.

³³⁸ F. Ferguson Social Worker Annual Report June 1958 – July 1959 in National Archives Australia; C3076, 5/1/4 CENTRAL.

Perhaps as a consequence of these suspicions the groups that were the most successful in the accommodation centres were those that were already familiar to the migrants and with whom they had previous contact, namely the Guides, Scouts, YMCA, YWCA and the Red Cross. Undoubtedly these positive perceptions were furthered by the international nature of these organisations and their long-standing work with people of different nationalities, often in stressful circumstances. Their regular, often internationally written and produced publications and annual conferences provided a global outlook. For example, the YWCA *World Communique* ran illustrated and informative articles which provided a wider context for its members about what was happening in Europe, while appealing for members to help as part of an international body.³³⁹ These international organisations, as one social worker stated, showed ‘the most constructive attitude to ... assimilation’.³⁴⁰

While the success of volunteer organisations in providing assistance to new arrivals and aiding the government in its objective of assimilation is difficult, if not impossible to measure, the recruitment of so many individual Australian men, women and children under the banner of a variety of voluntary organisations certainly fulfilled the stated objective of two-way assimilation and helped in the conditioning of many Australian citizens towards a greater acceptance of the mass migration scheme. As Ann-Mari Jordens argues, ‘The ultimate success of Australia’s program of mass migration depended on ... the

³³⁹ See for example *World Communique* February 1949 in National Archives Australia; A442, 1951/14/5144.

³⁴⁰ J. Moffat, Senior Social Worker, Comments on Social Worker Reports, 28 May 1954 in National Archives Australia: A445, 276/1/15; Social Workers' reports on hostel visiting.

social absorption of migrants'.³⁴¹ This thesis argues that much of this early work occurred in the accommodation centres.

With respect to religious organisations, I have argued that the government encouraged the participation of churches on the premise that they would assist in the assimilation of new migrants and certainly in a 1952 report to UNESCO on assimilation practices the DOI highlighted that an appreciable number of priests, ministers and laymen were engaged in work amongst migrants as 'Churches and Church organisations are in an advantageous position to render valuable assistance in organising ... contacts with the general community'.³⁴² But what evidence is available to judge whether churches had any real impact on assimilation, and how can we measure that impact if it in fact occurred?

In the 1970s and 80s sociologist Frank Lewins wrote a series of influential works on the role of the Catholic Church in the lives of post-war migrants in Australia. He identified a number of conflicting approaches which he argued led the Catholic Church to a 'neglect of cultural differences [which] led to feelings of antagonism and isolation among migrants' and resulted in the opening of separate ethnic centres, such as the Lithuanian Catholic Centre in Adelaide, which migrants saw as a focal point for national identity rather than a place to integrate into Australian society.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Jordens, A.-M., *Alien to Citizen*, p 147.

³⁴² Notes Supplied by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration in response to U.N.E.S.C.O. Questionnaire CL/635 April 1952 in National Archives Australia; A1838, 862/24/1.

³⁴³ Lewins, F.W., *The Myth of the Universal Church: Catholic Migrants in Australia*, Australia National University, Canberra, 1978, pp 93-94.

Similarly, the rise of Orthodox churches in the post-war era³⁴⁴ was founded on their role in the maintenance of ethnic and national identity rather than assimilation. There are many reports about the strength of the Orthodox movement in the hostels, including the Ukrainian Orthodox migrants who celebrated Christmas with a service in Ukrainian, conducted by a recently arrived migrant who had been a priest in Europe, followed by a traditional Christmas feast at the Capital Hill Hostel,³⁴⁵ or the Russian Orthodox residents at Villawood hostel who travelled into Sydney in order to attend their own church.³⁴⁶ Many of these Orthodox churches offered native language teaching for migrant children, welfare support and various cultural activities. As Tim Prenzler argues, churches like the Greek Orthodox Church were central to the migrants' lives and exemplified the 'maintenance of ethnic identity by religion'³⁴⁷ in a similar manner to those of the ethnic-based Catholic centres mentioned above.

With regard to other denominations, it is very difficult to assess the impact that they had on the assimilation of migrants. Archival documents indicate that some individual parishes, clergy and laymen were particularly important in promoting assimilation. The parishioners of the Presbyterian Parish of Noorat, for example, built a close association with Bonegilla, regularly taking families and children to stay in their homes to give them a break from the hostel and in the long term

³⁴⁴ Carey, H.M., *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards NSW, 1996, p 143.

³⁴⁵ See for example *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 6 January 1949, 'It's Christmas Eve for 60 People in Canberra', p 3.

³⁴⁶ Report, Manager Commonwealth Hostels Limited NSW 3 August 1957 in National Archives Australia; C3076, N5/1/12.

³⁴⁷ Prenzler, T., 'Recent Writing on the History of Religion in Australia: A Critique' in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 41, 1995, p 147.

finding work and housing in the district to aid in more permanent settlement.³⁴⁸

For many other denominations attendance at the local parish church was key and a variety of measures were adopted to facilitate this. St Georges Anglican Church in Gawler, for example, chartered a bus to bring migrants from the hostel at Willaston for the Sunday service³⁴⁹, while Protestant local ministers were encouraged to review the times of their services in order to fit in with the Sunday bus service and the hostel meal times.³⁵⁰ In Port Lincoln, ‘the local religious denominations provided transport from camp sites to enable Displaced Persons to attend church services on Sundays’.³⁵¹ The churches no doubt saw this work as a way of ensuring the migrants’ ongoing commitment to their religion and to the parishes outside of the hostel.

There is some evidence that the authorities were unhappy about the effectiveness of the Church in promoting assimilation. A 1951 social work report from Benalla Holding Centre stated that

[t]he assimilation that could ensue through attendance at Church and Church Clubs is limited by the fact that both Ministers [Methodist and Presbyterian] feel strongly that they do not wish to create an impression that they are “stealing sheep” from Lutheran or Orthodox Pastors. The Presbyterian and Methodist Ministers’ attitudes are that they and their parishioners welcome any migrant who comes to their

³⁴⁸ Multiple correspondence between Reverend M.J. Both and Colonel Guin Migrant Centre Bonegilla in National Archives Australia: A2567, 1956/82; [Bonegilla migrant reception and training centre] - Presbyterian Church in Australia.

³⁴⁹ *Bunyip*, Gawler, SA, 7 December 1951, 'Church to Run Bus', p 1.

³⁵⁰ Recommendation from YWCA National Immigration Committee Meeting, 9-10 August 1954 in National Archives Australia; A445, 220/11/2.

³⁵¹ Regional Director South Australia to Director of Employment Sydney, 21 October 1949 in National Archives Australia; D1917, D47/47 Part 3.

Church but will not make the first overture to the migrant in case it be taken to mean that they are wanting converts.³⁵²

The report concluded that ‘little assimilation work can be accomplished through the Protestant Churches until a more ecumenical outlook is reached’.³⁵³

So, while the various churches initially embraced the idea of assimilation and sought to establish themselves as part of the migrant community in the hostels, the evidence presented above indicates that this strategy was only partially successful and to a large extent depended on the approach of individual clergy and parishes. As the churches discovered, it is hard to undo a lifetime of culture and turn New Australians into Australians. Lutheran Pastor Scherer, preaching at a sermon in Horsham in 1950 (some years into the mass migration period), noted that

these “new Australians” are strangers to us in still quite another way. They have a different mentality; live in another world of thought. Having experienced the real horrors of war ... having lost their native country, their possessions, their loved ones, their whole past, they carry a certain vacuum in their souls. Perhaps nothing in Australia will ever quite fill it ... They are strangers. Some will always be so. A cross section may never become Australian. In their veins runs a strong, proud national sentiment ... It is hard to

³⁵² M King, Social Worker to H. Dobson, Officer in Charge Welfare Section Department of Immigration 3 December 1951 in National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/173; Social Welfare Section - Social Workers' Reports - Benalla Centre (Victoria).

³⁵³ M King, Social Worker to H. Dobson, Officer in Charge Welfare Section Department of Immigration 3 December 1951 in National Archives Australia; A437, 1950/6/173.

visualize how the “assimilation” policy will succeed. Perhaps not until in the second or third generation.³⁵⁴

So, as this chapter has shown the volunteer contributions to the assimilation effort were diverse, each bringing a range of slightly different agendas and focusing upon slightly different kinds of audience, particularly women and children. Ultimately, all were partial efforts that produced partial outcomes, and could not in themselves create a seamless transition from migrant to New Australian.

³⁵⁴ *Lutheran Herald*, Adelaide, 16 September 1950, 'New Australians', pp 291-2.

Chapter 7 Article 2: “Sport Brings Us Together”: Sport and the Assimilation of New Australians

This following article, submitted to the *International Journal of the History of Sport*, examines the role that physical recreation and the integration with the local community played in the assimilation of migrants and discusses how in a sport loving nation, migrant involvement in sporting activities was a way that authorities could demonstrate that new arrivals were contributing positively to the culture of the nation.

Statement of Authorship

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Title of Paper | "Sport Brings Us Together": Sport and the Assimilation of New Australians | |
| Publication Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Published <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication | <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Submitted to International Journal of the History of Sport May 2017 | |

Principal Author

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | |
| Contribution to the Paper | This paper is based on my own original research and is wholly my own work | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 100% | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | |
| Signature | | Date 8-5-17 |

“Sport Brings Us Together”: Sport and the Assimilation of New Australians

Abstract

This paper examines the role that sport and physical recreation played in the assimilation of European refugees and assisted migrants who arrived in Australia during the height of the assimilationist policy of the 1950s. It considers how Australia’s national obsession with sport was used as a tool to encourage acceptance of newly arrived migrants through introducing them to Australian sporting activities and encouraging them to participate in, and compete against, local sporting teams. The paper concentrates particularly on the way in which the understanding of the importance of sport and recreation as an assimilationist tool evolved in the special migrant accommodation centres which housed newly arrived migrants in this period.

Keywords: Assimilation, Sport, Migration, Displaced Persons, Migrant Hostels

Introduction

In Australia, scholarly study of assimilation has been ongoing since the arrival of the first group of Displaced Persons [DPs] from Europe in 1947. From as early as 1951, Dr Kajica Milanov, himself a DP, stated that assimilation was a difficult and complicated process that would require a ‘logically planned assimilation policy’.¹ However, throughout the 1950s debates on assimilation struggled to adequately define the exact expectations of the policy and failed to agree on how they should best be achieved. As official policy moved from assimilation, to integration, and eventually multiculturalism, scholars have continued to study the assimilationist years despite Wilton and Bosworth’s plea for the study of migration ‘to move beyond its focus on the migrant's place in and adjustment to Australian society’.²

Anna Haebich, for example, has been driven to re-examine the policy of assimilation by the need, in contemporary multicultural Australia, to understand what appears to be a wish for a return, in sections of the wider population, to the promises of the homogeneity of the 1950s.³ More recently, historian Joy Damousi has considered the long term consequences of a policy which denied migrants a past by expecting that new arrivals ‘would readily merge with or be subsumed in, Australian cultural life’.⁴ By contrast, Markus and Taft have moved away from the traditional position that assimilation policy was aimed solely at migrants to

¹ Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, p 75.

² Bosworth R & Wilton J, 'A lost history?: the study of European migration to Australia' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 27, 1981, p 225.

³ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Number Autumn, 2007.

⁴ Damousi, J., "We are Human Beings, and have a Past": The "Adjustment" of Migrants and the Australian Assimilation Policies of the 1950s' in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 59, Number 4, 2013, p 503.

argue that the policy was, in fact, as much about selling the immigration scheme to Australians as it was about assimilating new arrivals.⁵ In a similarly revisionist study, Kristy Kokegei argues that the outcome of the policy of assimilation was more akin to a migrant multicultural settlement program than the shedding of old ways and the adoption of an Australian way of life.⁶

This paper looks to contribute to this ongoing discussion by examining the role that physical recreation played in the assimilation of European refugees and assisted migrants who arrived in Australia during the height of the assimilationist policy of the 1950s. While not advocating that exposure to this policy was in any way a positive experience for post-war refugees and migrants, I will firstly argue that the promise of assimilation was essential in conditioning the Australian public to accept the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants and the considerable shift from the established Anglo-Celtic immigration practice of the past. Secondly I will show that the application of the policy of assimilation was more nuanced than has previously been accepted and, noting that there were strict limitations in both the resources and the finances available to enact the policy⁷, how the authorities looked to other, often subtle means (in this case the use of sport) in both educating the general public and encouraging new arrivals to adopt an Australian way of life.

⁵ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015.

⁶ Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012. Although the phrase "the Australian way of life" came into regular use in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular in Australia it was never clearly defined. It represented an imagined, quintessentially Australian character and lifestyle which revolved around the traditional nuclear family, and characteristics such as a generosity of spirit, belief in a fair go, and of course a love of sport. See Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life' in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.) *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953. White, R., 'The Australian Way of Life' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 18, Number 73, 1979.

⁷ Markus & Taft, 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation'.

Taylor and Toohey have argued that acceptable expressions of ethnicity by non-English speaking migrant groups vary, and that participation in cultural activities such as dance, art and sport are generally seen more positively.⁸ In the case of post-war Australia, migrant participation in sport was seen as an ideal way of introducing a key component of Australian culture to new arrivals. Using primarily archival material, I will show that physical activity, both socially and competitively, was thus an essential part of the policy of assimilation especially in the accommodation centres that housed newly arrived migrants. For a sport loving nation, migrant involvement at all levels was both a means to facilitate the mixing of “old” and “new” Australians, and a mechanism by which the authorities could demonstrate that new arrivals were contributing positively to the sporting culture of the nation.⁹

The Role of Sport and Recreation in an International Context

In immigrant nations such as America and Canada the examination of the role of sport in migrant assimilation and integration has a long history. Of particular note is the work of sociologist Maria Allison, who in the 1970s and 80s explored the strongly held belief that, through participation in sport, ‘ethnic group members could be socialised into the value system and structure of American society’; that sport was a mechanism of assimilation.¹⁰ Although Allison concluded that participation in sport may result in the adoption of the behaviours of the dominant

⁸ Taylor, T. & Toohey, K., 'Ethnic Barriers to Sports Participation' in *Australian Parks and Recreation*, Volume 31, Number 2, 1995, p 33.

⁹ Please note I am using the terms old and new Australians in the sense of length of residence. The use of new Australian is not that of the common use of the day when New Australian was introduced by the Australian authorities as a more positive term to the commonly used derogatory terms “reffo” and “Balt”. Although New Australian would itself develop negative connotations.

¹⁰ Allison, M.T., 'Sport, Ethnicity, and Assimilation' in *Quest*, Volume 34, Number 2, 1982, p 166.

or host society, the process was not as complete, nor as simplistic as often assumed or implied, nor was the level of participation an accurate measure of assimilation. This assertion that, under the “melting-pot” ideology of 1950s America, sport was considered to be an ‘homogenizing agent’, which was frequently assumed to accelerate the process of assimilation, has strong links to the Australian attitude of the same period, that is sport acted as an agent to aid migrant assimilation into the Australian way of life.¹¹

Subsequent studies of ethnic based sporting clubs in the Americas have both supported and challenged the role of recreational sport as an assimilation agent. For example, while John Pooley’s study of ethnic soccer clubs in Milwaukee concluded that these clubs inhibited assimilation, in replicating this study by examining ethnic soccer clubs in London (Canada), Robert Day contrarily found that the ethnic soccer clubs in fact encouraged assimilation.¹² More recently, Stodolska and Alexandris, examining the role of recreational sport in the adaptation of Korean and Polish migrants in the United States, concluded that, as Allison had argued, the consequences of participation were in fact far more complex. In fact, for these migrants who had arrived in the 1970s and 80s, participation in sport had either acculturated them into American society, or had solidified their ties with their own ethnic communities, consequently preserving

¹¹ Allison, M.T., 'On the Ethnicity of Ethnic Minorities in Sport' in *Quest*, Volume 31, Number 1, 1979, p 53.

¹² Day, R.D., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in London, Canada. A Study in Assimilation' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 16, Number 1, 1981, Pooley, J., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in Milwaukee: A Study of Assimilation' in Hart, M. (ed.) *Sport in the Socio-Cultural Process*, William Brown, Dunuque, USA, 1976.

and promoting their ethnic values.¹³ Furthermore, Allison concluded that ethnic participation in a particular sport may actually change the nature of that sport to reflect the values of the ethnic culture therefore 'not only are ethnic groups influenced by interactions within the sport setting, but they too, influence the very nature of the sport itself'.¹⁴ In the Australian context, as we will see, this exchange of cultures through the mixing of the old and new Australians was the intention of the extended definition of assimilation as a two-way process.

In the few historical studies conducted in Australia on migrant participation in sport, the same complexities are evident. Certainly, Anthony Hughes' work on Jewish migrants found that Jewish sporting clubs were often their first point of social contact, and that participation in these clubs played an important role, both in integrating them into the Jewish community, and into Australian society.¹⁵ By contrast, Phillip Mosely contends that the sporting clubs formed by Italian migrants in Australia, reinforced their ethnic values, customs and traditions, as well as providing a link to their homeland.¹⁶ Undoubtedly, Peter Kell is more forceful in his assertion that despite the Australian rhetoric that sport is "the great leveller", and that "sport brings us together" regardless of class or ethnicity, in fact, far from being a source of unity, he argues that 'sport in Australia has always been a source of divisiveness and a site of exclusion ... [and] has reinforced

¹³ Stodolska, M. & Alexandris, K., 'The Role of Recreational Sport in the Adaptation of First Generation Immigrants in the United States' in *Journal of Leisure Research*, Volume 36, Number 3, 2004.

¹⁴ Allison, 'Sport, Ethnicity, and Assimilation', p 173.

¹⁵ Hughes, A., 'The Jewish Community' in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., *et al.* (eds.) *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, p 114.

¹⁶ Mosley, P., 'The Italian Community' in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., *et al.* (eds.) *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp 100-01.

anxieties and fears about outsiders and foreigners'.¹⁷ This outcome (if true) is in direct contrast, as will be shown below, to the aims of the Australian authorities in the 1950s, namely that sport could be used to convince the host population that the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants was not a threat to their way of life and, that new arrivals were just as sport-loving as Australians.

Perhaps understandably, given the popularity of soccer in the lives of post-war migrants in Australia, and the subsequent publicity given to ethnic divisions and violence on the soccer fields from the 1970s, there has been an over emphasis on this game in studies of migrant involvement in sport.¹⁸ One exception is *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*¹⁹, which makes an important contribution to ethnic sporting history in Australia. However, the division of this edited collection by ethnic origin and then by specific sports largely results in a history of what historian Kathleen Conzen calls “contributionism” the desire to document specific ethnic groups "contributions" to the new society.²⁰

More recent research on migrant adaption to host societies continues to indicate that politicians and policy makers, albeit through the lens of multiculturalism, are still looking to sport as an ‘effective and unproblematic way for interethnic

¹⁷ Kell, P., *Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*, Pluto Press, Annandale, NSW, 2000, p 11.

¹⁸ See for example Hallinan, C.J. & Krotee, M.L., 'Conceptions of Nationalism and Citizenship Among Non-Anglo-Celtic Soccer Clubs in an Australian City' in *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, Volume 17, Number 2, 1993. Mosely, P., *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer: A History 1950-1990*, Australian Sports Commission, Belconnen, ACT, 1995.

¹⁹ Mosley, P., Cashman, R. et al. (eds.) *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997.

²⁰ Conzen, K.N., 'Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of a Pluralist America' in Trommler, F. & Shore, E. (eds.) *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, Berghahn, New York, 2001, p 7.

contact and socialization'.²¹ As Krouwel et al. highlight, the 2003 Nice Declaration of the European Council noted that sport 'is a factor making for integration, involvement in social life, tolerance, acceptance of differences and playing by the rules ... In a sports hall or on a sports field everyone is equal'.²² In a recent paper on Somali refugees in Australia, Ramón Spaaij has also shown that in a sport loving nation such as Australia, being good at sport may be perceived both by the new arrivals as a way of "making-it" in the new country, and by policy makers and advocacy groups, as a means to promote the positives of refugee settlement.²³ Recent studies, it would seem, have strong links to 1950s assimilationist Australia, at least in regard to sport as an integrating activity.

Recreation in the Accommodation Centres

Between 1947 and 1960 there were over 90 migrant accommodation centres operating across Australia. The centres were established for a number of reasons including as a consequence of the severe housing and materials shortage in post-war Australia, and the resultant impact the arrival of large numbers of migrants would have on the wider population as they potentially competed for the limited resources available. Migrants were charged a weekly rent and received very basic accommodation, often in ex-army huts.²⁴ Food was served cafeteria style in large

²¹ Krouwel, A., Boonstra, N. et al., 'A Good Sport? Research into the Capacity of Recreational Sport to Integrate Dutch Minorities' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 41, Number 2, 2006, p 165.

²² Krouwel, Boonstra et al., 'A Good Sport? Research into the Capacity of Recreational Sport to Integrate Dutch Minorities', p 176.

²³ Spaaij, R., 'Refugee youth, belonging and community sport' in *Leisure Studies*, Volume 34, Number 3, 2015, p 304.

²⁴ The amount of rent was adjusted for men, women and children (by age). It also changed over time. As an example in 1949 Holding Centres charged each person over 16 years 30/- per week, for each child 3-16 years 12/6 per week and for children under 3 years accommodation was

institutional dining rooms, and migrants had access to communal bathrooms, laundries and other facilities including those for recreation. These centres represented a liminal space, a space between the old ways and the new, where migrants could potentially be assimilated into the Australian way of life. Whilst in this space they could attend lessons in English and civics, their children could be introduced to the kindergarten and school systems, and they could take part in activities which brought them into contact with the wider community.²⁵

Early social worker reports indicate that, initially, facilities for recreational physical activity were poor, with little equipment available. They noted the need for organised activities, especially for migrant children and youth.²⁶ Consequently, by March 1949, just over 15 months after the first DPs arrived, fixed playground equipment was considered

an essential component for a properly conducted physical education programme as well as providing a useful recreational activity for children outside normal school hours.²⁷

A set of standard sporting equipment was also supplied to each centre for the use of children of all ages. This equipment included long and short skipping ropes,

free. National Archives Australia: K403, W59/926 Part 1; [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100.

²⁵ On the role of kindergartens in the centres see Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia' in *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016.

²⁶ National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/2; Social workers annual reports - New South Wales.

²⁷ H.C. Giese National Fitness Officer to Department of Health, 15 March 1949 in National Archives Australia: A445, 220/9/4; Recreational and Sporting Facilities at Migrant Centres - National Fitness Officers' Assistance.

cane hoops, medicine balls, softball sets, basketballs, footballs (Australian Rules), tumbling mats, rubber quoits, and cricket sets.²⁸

Keeping children of all ages occupied, especially after school, at weekends and during school holidays was essential to relieve the inevitable boredom of centre life. Contemporary social worker reports claim that '[u]noccupied youth in a centre usually means a great deal of maintenance and repair work' implying the risk of bad behaviour through inactivity and boredom.²⁹ As a report to the first Quarterly Immigration Committee Meeting in 1951 stated:

[t]he more newcomers can be absorbed into regular activities ... the happier they will be. ... There is need for Recreation officers on the Camp Staffs to organise games and healthy recreation in the children's leisure time. [Emphasis in original]³⁰

The employment of youth workers in the centres from the early 1950s helped in the organisation of activities, and participation in team sports was encouraged and facilitated by the use of volunteers from the wider population.³¹

However, sport was not just about relieving boredom and having fun; it was also recognised as a means to aid assimilation especially through the mixing of new and old Australians. Newspapers regularly published appeals for Australians to mix with the new settlers, 'play sports with them ... so that they can see the

²⁸ National Archives Australia; Recreational and Sporting Facilities at Migrant Centres - National Fitness Officers' Assistance.

²⁹ Annual Social Work Report Cowra 1952-3 in National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/11; Social Welfare special problems financial.

³⁰ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/11/2; Quarterly Regional Conferences - YWCA.

³¹ National Archives Australia: D2973, 5/1/1; Welfare General.

Australian way of living'.³² Local sporting clubs were encouraged to visit migrant centres, to give demonstrations, and arouse the migrants' interest and encourage them to participate in sports, especially those sports strongly linked to the Australian way of life such as cricket and Australian Rules football.³³ More familiar sports were also encouraged, with children at the Wacol Centre, for example, taken twice weekly to the local oval to play soccer and tennis against Australian children.³⁴

By encouraging migrant children to participate in sporting activities outside of the centres, both they, and their parents, were exposed to the social and cultural norms of the host population. The physical activity program in the centres was further expanded in 1951 after the Annual Citizenship Convention resolved that the National Fitness Council should also be involved within the centres, adding more resources and involving more Australian volunteers in the existing programs³⁵, particularly during school holiday periods. At the Greta centre, for example, the "Y building", operated by the YMCA was open every day and evening and attendance was around 100 in the morning, 150 to 200 in the

³² See for example *Brisbane Telegraph*, Queensland, 25 May 1950, 'Plea To Aid Assimilation of New Settlers', p 16.

³³ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1951, p 40.

³⁴ National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/91; Reports by Social Worker at Brisbane, Queensland.

³⁵ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, 1951, p 40. In 1941 the government had passed the National Fitness Act in an attempt to improve the fitness of young Australians in preparation for the armed services. This act provided funds for state based National Fitness Councils who then utilised volunteers to run fitness and sporting programs. The Act remained in operation until 1994. See Collins, J.A. & Lekkas, P., 'Fit for Purpose: Australia's National Fitness Campaign' in *Medical Journal of Australia*, Volume 195, Number 11, 2011. The Australian Citizenship Conventions occurred annually (later biennially) between 1950 and 1968. The aim of these Conventions was to bring together representatives from the Government and from a variety of voluntary organisations including the churches who were actively involved in the assimilation of new arrivals. Meetings discussed the problems experienced by migrants, made recommendations to facilitate and improve their integration into Australian society and promoted Australian citizenship.

afternoon and 200 to 400 in the evening. Badminton, table tennis, draughts and boxing were particularly popular pastimes. Participation in these types of activities also resulted in the organisation of games against local clubs.³⁶

The success of these programs of encouraged participation was noted in the *First Report on the Progress and Assimilation of Migrant Children in Australia* which commented on the presence of young migrants at sports meetings and how pleasing it was that the ‘applause for these contestants was possibly just a little more pronounced than for Australians’, implying a growing acceptance, of migrant children at least, within the wider community.³⁷ The report also noted that participation in junior soccer and sports associations was successful in bringing migrant and Australian children together, and although many migrant children were not yet ‘thoroughly assimilated [they] have made excellent progress’.³⁸

Physical recreation was not just for children and indeed the need for physical activity for adults within the centres was reinforced during the coal strike of 1949. This strike, which occurred at the height of the arrival of DPs, forced a halt to much of Australia’s industry. This resulted in adult migrants spending longer periods in the centres, unemployed and unoccupied. In response, authorities arranged for an officer of the Personal Practice Branch to be attached to each of the large hostels in New South Wales and Victoria, and the Commonwealth Office of Education was asked to provide an emergency programme of day-time

³⁶ National Archives Australia; Quarterly Regional Conferences - YWCA.

³⁷ Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council - Special Committee, 1960, First Report on the progress and assimilation of migrant children in Australia.

³⁸ Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council - Special Committee, 1960, First Report on the progress and assimilation of migrant children in Australia

tuition in English.³⁹ Although the immediate aim was to relieve boredom and provide a sense of purpose for the migrants, the Recreation Officers quickly realised the opportunity for advancing the assimilation cause. Along with training in English conversation and civics, they concentrated on those aspects of recreation which would assist in ‘the assimilation of the migrants into the life of the community’, including calling on organisations such as the YMCA and the Parks Association to help with activities such as hiking, soccer, volley ball and table tennis.⁴⁰ This immediate response to the coal strike also had longer term consequences. After the strike, reports noted that, through these organised activities, migrants had learnt more about Australia and Australian life and customs, and that their contact with Australians during these activities had improved their knowledge of English and dispelled ‘much of the prejudice that was felt by Australians who in many cases were inclined to resent and mistrust foreigners’.⁴¹ It was apparent that physical activities promoted the two-way assimilationist aims, educating both new and old Australians and therefore it was determined that there was ‘a lasting need for social recreation and this should include Australians to help assimilation’.⁴²

The role of sport in the assimilation of new arrivals was also discussed in January 1952 at the Third Annual Citizenship Convention. Delegates noted that

³⁹ National Archives Australia: MP651/1, 1956/273; Assimilation of migrants in industry and their personal problems - Personal Practice Branch. The Personal Practice Branch was part of the Department of Labour and National Service (who were in charge of many of the accommodation centres) and was generally involved in welfare issues.

⁴⁰ National Archives Australia; Assimilation of migrants in industry and their personal problems - Personal Practice Branch.

⁴¹ National Archives Australia; Assimilation of migrants in industry and their personal problems - Personal Practice Branch.

⁴² National Archives Australia; Assimilation of migrants in industry and their personal problems - Personal Practice Branch.

‘[s]porting associations, in general, have taken a very active interest in the New Australians and most organisations have newcomers in their teams’. Furthermore, migrants, they said ‘excel in many games in which they participate, in particular, basket-ball, soccer, table-tennis and chess’.⁴³ As participation in sport was considered an excellent means of assimilating new arrivals and encouraging Australians to take an active interest in the migration program, the Convention passed a resolution that ‘it is desirable that every effort should be made to integrate interested migrants into Australian sporting activities’.⁴⁴ As a consequence, the Department of Immigration sent letters to an extensive range of sporting groups, including the Australian Polo Association, the Life Saving Association, the Australian Rugby Football League, the All Australian Hockey Association and of course the Australian Soccer Football Association.⁴⁵ The letters encouraged sporting associations to both go into the migrant accommodation centres, and to encourage migrants in the wider community to participate.

Newspaper reports give a good indication of the sports regularly played in the centres, and the way in which the new and old Australians mixed, both on the field, and during post-match entertainment and celebration. It is hardly surprising that soccer was the sport of choice for many migrants and centres often formed teams, such as the Woodside United Soccer Team (which was almost undefeated in 1949, with players from six different countries taking on South Australian teams in the local competition). However, there is evidence of migrants

⁴³ National Archives Australia: A445, 146/3/3A; Australian Citizenship Convention 1952 General.

⁴⁴ National Archives Australia; Australian Citizenship Convention 1952 General.

⁴⁵ National Archives Australia; Australian Citizenship Convention 1952 General.

participating in more traditionally Australian sports as well. For example, despite their recent introduction to the game the migrants at Bathurst Reception and Training Centre played cricket against local teams.⁴⁶ Cricket was also the game of choice for the match between a young migrant eleven and the staff at the Northam Centre in Western Australia in April 1951.⁴⁷ According to the Director of the Bathurst Centre, the majority of migrants there were keen to learn to play; however, table tennis, chess, volleyball, basketball, and football of ‘the European kind’ were also popular.⁴⁸ Reports such as these, of course, had a direct role in reinforcing to the Australian readership that these new arrivals were taking part in, and assimilating to, the Australian way of life.

Many centres also started staff sports clubs and, given a significant percentage of the staff within centres were in fact new arrivals, office bearers and participants were often migrants. The Bathurst Centre Sports Club for example, was formed in July 1948 and among the first committee members were Latvian born Mr Bundze (club secretary), Mr Liepins (in charge of basketball) and Mr Laksevics (table tennis) and others.⁴⁹ Even at this local level, such clubs promoted mixing between old and new Australians within the club, and with the external teams they played. By 1954, a review of facilities at centres stated that

[s]ports grounds have been constructed where space is available and many centres have football teams playing in local competitions. All

⁴⁶ *National Advocate*, Bathurst, NSW, 13 December 1948, 'Sport at Migrant Centre', p 2.

⁴⁷ *The Northam Advertiser*, Western Australia, 6 April 1951, 'Migrant Children Interest in Cricket', p 1.

⁴⁸ *National Advocate*, Bathurst, NSW 1 July 1948, 'Migrants Cricket', p 2.

⁴⁹ *National Advocate*, Bathurst, NSW, 10 July 1948, 'Bathurst Migrant Centre starts sports club', p 2.

centres have tennis courts, table tennis facilities, volley ball courts, etc, and competitive matches are played with local teams.⁵⁰

This shift from the rudimentary facilities of 1949 is evidence of the significance placed on migrant participation in sport.

Sport and the Australian Way of Life

It is evident that participation in recreational activities, especially in sporting teams, was considered to be an excellent way of assimilating new arrivals into the Australian way of life. Within the accommodation centres, sport was also used as a didactic tool to help new arrivals understand what that way of life might mean. So, for example, publications for migrants, such as the monthly migrant newsletter and the *New Australian* periodical, often contained news about what was happening in sport nationally as well as instructional pieces about quintessentially Australian sports such as cricket.

Correspondence between the Department of Information, who supplied the migrant newsletter, and centre directors, indicate that it was welcomed by the latter and the Bonegilla director, Major Kershaw, commented that in his opinion the newsletter would be beneficial in the 'effort to familiarise new arrivals with their adopted country'.⁵¹ The content was written in simple English and covered topics as diverse as what Australians were planting in their gardens this month to notifications and explanations of public holidays. Also included was information such as how, in summer, cricket replaces football as the main sport in Australia,

⁵⁰ National Archives Australia: A12799, 9; Migrant Accommodation Centre Division - Functions.

⁵¹ National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 21.166; Immigration - Bulletin Board News - Displaced Persons.

and the origins of the Melbourne Cup (horseracing) with the primary aim of assisting migrants to 'know more about their new homeland and become acquainted with our customs, ... sports, etc.'. ⁵²

The Department of Immigration's monthly migrant newspaper *The New Australian* covered much of the same material. Also written in simple English, this publication aimed to advise European migrants on various aspects of their new life. It contained a monthly English lesson, advice on matters of Australian law, Australian customs, but, most of all, advice to migrants on how to be successful in their new life.⁵³ In keeping with these overall aims *The New Australian* also sought to educate new arrivals on Australian sporting traditions. For example, in May 1951, a long article discussed the quintessential winter sport, Australian Rules Football, outlining its history, terminology, and the rules of the game.⁵⁴ The following May a similar article was also published; however, at this time much was made of the fact that many New Australians were now also playing in local competitions.⁵⁵ Other articles, published at the end of spring, educated new arrivals on Australia's other national sport, cricket. The copy included information about the great British/Australian rivalry in this sport, and of course, information about Australia's greatest cricketer, Don Bradman.⁵⁶

⁵² National Archives Australia; Immigration - Bulletin Board News - Displaced Persons.

⁵³ National Archives Australia: A1838, 862/24/1; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural assimilation of immigrants.

⁵⁴ *The New Australian*, Canberra, May 1951, 'Australian football is good to play and good to watch', p 2.

⁵⁵ *The New Australian*, Canberra, May 1952 'National Football is Australia's most popular winter game', p 4.

⁵⁶ *The New Australian*, Canberra, October 1950, 'Cricket is Australia's popular game in summer', p 2.

The New Australian articles were also full of praise for those who were already taking part in sporting activities, using these success stories as a means of encouragement for others. Reports on successful teams included Scheyville Holding Centre Soccer team's (comprising migrant men visiting their families in the centre and their older sons) victory over a team from the nearby community of Richmond⁵⁷ and the prowess of an Estonian basketball team, who, the newspaper noted, had done 'much to make basketball popular in Adelaide. The standard of the game has risen since they arrived'.⁵⁸ Despite this praise, *The New Australian* also lamented that migrant participation in sport was primarily in the sports associated with migrants rather than Australians. As the November 1950 issue explained:

[a]ll over Australia you will find New Australians entering into sporting events. This is good, because Australians are great lovers of sport and admire people who play games well [however, they are] seen mainly at soccer, basketball, snow sports and table tennis.⁵⁹

Perhaps, the paper concluded, '[i]t is yet too early to expect New Australians to play the Australian games of cricket and football, but there is every indication that they will'.⁶⁰ In the minds of the Australian authorities a shift to participation in the quintessentially Australian games of Australian Rules football and cricket would be the ultimate measure of assimilation success.

⁵⁷ *The New Australian*, Canberra, July 1950, 'Scheyville beat the schoolboys at soccer', p 3.

⁵⁸ *The New Australian*, Canberra, September 1951, 'New Australian basketballers in Adelaide ', p 2.

⁵⁹ *The New Australian*, Canberra, November 1950, 'New Australians are not taking their part in any sports ', p 4.

⁶⁰ *The New Australian*, 'New Australians are not taking their part in any sports '.

Mainstream newspapers regularly ran articles on successful migrant sporting achievements, as well as special interest pieces, with the aim of evidencing the successful assimilation of new arrivals. Under the banner ‘They're Aussies Now — and Good Sports Too’ the *Melbourne Age* article reported on the participation by the Somers Migrant Centre School in an interschool sports carnival. The article highlighted the prowess of eleven-year-old Victor who ‘leaped high into the admiration of his native-born Australian rivals when he cleared several inches more than some of the competitors’.⁶¹ Not only were these young new Australians presented as great competitors, their achievements should also make Australians proud, especially when Victor, on behalf of other migrant children from the centre, stated that they liked Australia ‘a great lot indeed and we have liked so much to run in the sports’.⁶²

In accordance with the contemporary understanding of assimilation as a two-way practice (the process of introducing new settlers into the local population so that the benefits would be mutual), newspapers regularly reported on migrants wanting to give back to the Australian population. DP Skaidrite Ausins, for example, who had been breast stroke champion of Latvia, was reported as having ‘dreams of leaving the Woodside Centre to find a home close to the beach and teach young Australian boys and girls to swim’.⁶³ European migrants, were not only taking part, but also excelling in a variety of sports, and this participation

⁶¹ *The Age*, Melbourne, Vic., 5 May 1951, ‘They're Aussies Now-- and Good Sports Too’, p 3.

⁶² *The Age*, ‘They're Aussies Now-- and Good Sports Too’.

⁶³ *The News*, Adelaide, SA, 2 Jul 1949, ‘Balt Woman Migrant Won Swimming Title’, p 10.

was increasing their 'number of friends and widen[ing] their knowledge of the Australian way of life'.⁶⁴

Of course, the 1956 Melbourne Olympics offered an even wider stage to praise the achievements of, and showcase the successful assimilation of, new arrivals. Although coverage of new Australian athletes would never match that of the Australian born heroes of the games, migrants were showcased, and their contributions in sports, which were often not traditionally Australian strongpoints, such as soccer and fencing, were highlighted.⁶⁵ Of particular note was the young Latvian-born Jon Konrads who conquered the prominent Australian sport of swimming. Only a teenager at these Olympics, Konrads, who learnt to swim at Uranquinty Migrant Centre would go on to star for Australia over many years and as the *Argus* predicted in 1956 'the world publicity Australia is going to get out of the name of Konrads will repay a thousand times over for the boat trip to Australia and the hostel accommodation at Wagga'.⁶⁶

Although naturalisations, the ultimate goal of assimilation, were reportedly up in this period⁶⁷, it is impossible to know whether this rise in applications for citizenship was as a result of the nationalistic fervour that surrounded the lead up to the games in Melbourne, or simply as a consequence of time elapsed (given that by 1956 many thousands of migrants had then been in Australia the required length of time to apply). Certainly there was a 'frantic effort' on behalf of some

⁶⁴ *Tomorrow's Australians*, Canberra, 6 June 1949, 'European Migrants are being assimilated into Australian way of life', p 5.

⁶⁵ For fencing see *Western Herald*, Bourke, NSW, 24 August 1956 'Local and General', p 14. For soccer see for example *Good Neighbour*, Canberra, 1 July 1952, 'New Australians have given a boost to soccer', p 2.

⁶⁶ *The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 20 February 1956, 'Here's an unsung world star on the way', p 16.

⁶⁷ *The Biz*, Fairfield, NSW, 10 October 1956 'Naturalisations A Record', p 27.

sports to have laws relaxed to allow naturalisations and make new arrivals eligible to compete for Australia.⁶⁸ As the *Good Neighbour* stated '[i]n a sport-loving country such as Australia, it is obvious that the migrant who takes part in sport is already well on the road to assimilation. And recent experience in Australia has shown that not only does Europe produce good new settlers, but migrants produce good sport'.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Central to the success of Australia's mass migration scheme of the 1950s was the "conditioning" of the Australian people who needed to be educated not only about the necessity of mass migration for future defence and advancement, but perhaps more importantly, assured that the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants would not impact upon their "Australian way of life".⁷⁰

Through analysis of contemporary government records and other archival sources, this paper has shown how, especially within migrant accommodation centres, physical recreation held an increasingly important role in both inculcating a vision of the Australian way of life in newly arrived migrants, and assisting in the two-way assimilation process. From children's play equipment to ovals and tennis courts, migrants were encouraged to participate for health, to relieve boredom, and to encourage mixing with members of organisations such as the

⁶⁸ For example the Australian Olympic wrestling team. *The Argus*, Melbourne, 25 October 1956, 'Four out of our team', p 20.

⁶⁹ *Good Neighbour*, Canberra, 1 October 1957, 'Migrant Sports Stars Among Our Top-Liners', p 4.

⁷⁰ The word "Conditioning" was used in the 1946 Haylen Report see Lack, J. & Templeton, J., *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration Since 1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, pp 21-23. The term would continue to be used in official documents see for example National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330; Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio.

YMCA and local sporting groups. Sport, an important element of the Australian way of life, was a key element in implementing assimilation policy of the time.

Bibliography

- Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia' in *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016, pp 277-91.
- Allison, M.T., 'On the Ethnicity of Ethnic Minorities in Sport' in *Quest*, Volume 31, Number 1, 1979, pp 50-56.
- Allison, M.T., 'Sport, Ethnicity, and Assimilation' in *Quest*, Volume 34, Number 2, 1982, pp 165-75.
- Bosworth R & Wilton J, 'A lost history?: the study of European migration to Australia' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 27, 1981, pp 221-31.
- Brisbane Telegraph*, Queensland, 25 May 1950, 'Plea To Aid Assimilation of New Settlers'.
- Collins, J.A. & Lekkas, P., 'Fit for Purpose: Australia's National Fitness Campaign' in *Medical Journal of Australia*, Volume 195, Number 11, 2011, pp 714-16.
- Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council - Special Committee, 1960, First Report on the progress and assimilation of migrant children in Australia Immigration, D.o.
- Conzen, K.N., 'Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of a Pluralist America', in Trommler, F. & Shore, E. (eds.), *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, Berghahn, New York, 2001, pp 7-21.
- Damousi, J., "'We are Human Beings, and have a Past": The "Adjustment" of Migrants and the Australian Assimilation Policies of the 1950s' in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 59, Number 4, 2013, pp 501-16.
- Day, R.D., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in London, Canada. A Study in Assimilation' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 16, Number 1, 1981, pp 37-52.
- Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1951.

- Good Neighbour*, Canberra, 1 July 1952, 'New Australians have given a boost to soccer'.
- Good Neighbour*, Canberra, 1 October 1957, 'Migrant Sports Stars Among Our Top-Liners'.
- Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Number Autumn, 2007, pp 162-72.
- Hallinan, C.J. & Krotee, M.L., 'Conceptions of Nationalism and Citizenship Among Non-Anglo-Celtic Soccer Clubs in an Australian City' in *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, Volume 17, Number 2, 1993, pp 125-33.
- Hughes, A., 'The Jewish Community', in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., *et al.* (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp 103-15.
- Hughson, J., 'Football, Folk Dancing and Facism: Diversity and difference in multicultural Australia' in *Journal of Sociology*, Volume 33, Number 2, 1997, pp 167-86.
- Kell, P., *Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*, Pluto Press, Annandale, NSW, 2000.
- Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012.
- Krouwel, A., Boonstra, N., *et al.*, 'A Good Sport? Research into the Capacity of Recreational Sport to Integrate Dutch Minorities' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 41, Number 2, 2006, pp 165-80.
- Lack, J. & Templeton, J., *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration Since 1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995.
- Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015, pp 234-51.
- Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, pp 71-78.
- Mosely, P., *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer: A History 1950-1990*, Australian Sports Commission, Belconnen, ACT, 1995.
- Mosley, P., 'The Italian Community', in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., *et al.* (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp 88-102.
- Mosley, P., Cashman, R., *et al.* (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997.

National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW, 10 Jul 1948, 'Bathurst Migrant Centre starts sports club'.

National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW 1 July 1948, 'Migrants Cricket'.

National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW, 13 December 1948, 'Sport at Migrant Centre'.

National Archives Australia: **A12799; 9**, Migrant Accommodation Centre Division - Functions.

National Archives Australia: **A1838; 862/24/1**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural assimilation of immigrants.

National Archives Australia: **A436; 1948/5/330**, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio.

National Archives Australia: **A437; 1950/6/91**, Reports by Social Worker at Brisbane, Queensland.

National Archives Australia: **A445; 146/3/3A**, Australian Citizenship Convention 1952 General.

National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/11/2**, Quarterly Regional Conferences - YWCA.

National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/9/4**, Recreational and Sporting Facilities at Migrant Centres - National Fitness Officers' Assistance.

National Archives Australia: **A445; 276/2/11**, Social Welfare special problems financial.

National Archives Australia: **A445; 276/3/2**, Social workers annual reports - New South Wales.

National Archives Australia: **CP815/1; 21.166**, Immigration - Bulletin Board News - Displaced Persons.

National Archives Australia: **D2973; 5/1/1**, Welfare General.

National Archives Australia: **J25; 1961/9500**, 1) Assimilation - 2) New Settlers League - 3) General Policy.

National Archives Australia: **K403; W59/926 Part 1**, [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100.

National Archives Australia: **MP651/1; 1956/273**, Assimilation of migrants in industry and their personal problems - Personal Practice Branch.

Pennay, B., *The Young at Bonegilla: Receiving Young Immigrants at Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre, 1947-1971*, Parklands Albury-Wodonga, 2010.

- Peters, N., Bush, F., *et al.*, *Graylands & Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres*, Centre for Western Australian History, Perth, 1996.
- Pooley, J., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in Milwaukee: A Study of Assimilation', in Hart, M. (ed.), *Sport in the Socio-Cultural Process*, William Brown, Dunuque, USA, 1976, pp 475-92.
- Spaaij, R., 'Refugee youth, belonging and community sport' in *Leisure Studies*, Volume 34, Number 3, 2015, pp 303-18.
- Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 3-14.
- Stodolska, M. & Alexandris, K., 'The Role of Recreational Sport in the Adaptation of First Generation Immigrants in the United States' in *Journal of Leisure Research*, Volume 36, Number 3, 2004, pp 379-413.
- Taylor, T. & Toohey, K., 'Ethnic Barriers to Sports Participation' in *Australian Parks and Recreation*, Volume 31, Number 2, 1995, pp 32-36.
- The Age*, Melbourne, Vic., 5 May 1951, 'They're Aussies Now-- and Good Sports Too'.
- The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic, 25 October 1956, 'Four out of our team'.
- The Argus*, Melbourne, Vic., 20 February 1956, 'Here's an unsung world star on the way'.
- The Biz*, Fairfield, NSW, 10 October 1956 'Naturalisations A Record'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, October 1950, 'Cricket is Australia's popular game in summer'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, November 1950, 'New Australians are not taking their part in any sports '.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, July 1950, 'Scheyville beat the schoolboys at soccer'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, May 1951, 'Australian football is good to play and good to watch '.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, September 1951, 'New Australian basketballers in Adelaide '.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, May 1952 'National Football is Australia's most popular winter game '.
- The News*, Adelaide, SA, 2 Jul 1949, 'Balt Woman Migrant Won Swimming Title'.

The Northam Advertiser, Western Australia, 6 April 1951, 'Migrant Children Interest in Cricket'.

Tomorrow's Australians, Canberra, 6 June 1949, 'European Migrants are being assimilated into Australian way of life'.

Western Herald, Bourke, NSW, 24 August 1956 'Local and General'.

White, R., 'The Australian Way of Life' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 18, Number 73, 1979, pp 528-45.

Chapter 8 Article 3: *Lights, Camera, Assimilation: Introducing “New Australians” to the Australian way of life through film*

The following article, submitted to *Film and History* considers how film was used in assimilation within the hostel by examining the educational and entertainment films that were shown and the importance that was placed on film by the Department of Immigration.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title of Paper | Lights, Camera, Assimilation: Introducing "New Australians" to the Australian way of life through film |
| Publication Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Published <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Submitted to Film and History May 2017 |

Principal Author

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | |
| Contribution to the Paper | This paper is based on my own original research and is wholly my own work | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 100% | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | |
| Signature | Date | 8 - 5 - 17 |

Lights, Camera, Assimilation: Introducing “New Australians” to the Australian way of life through film.

Abstract

This paper examines a subtle means of assimilation of post Second World War immigrants to Australia, namely the screening of carefully selected feature and documentary films within the migrant accommodation centres that were the first place of residence of new migrants. It uses archival evidence to explore the types of film produced for, and screened in, the accommodation centres and the way in which these films were used. Although we do not know the precise impact of targeted film in shaping migrant perceptions, this paper will show that for the Department of Immigration, both documentary and feature films were an important tool in the larger assimilation program that aimed to introduce new arrived migrants to the Australian way of life.

Keywords: Assimilation, Film, Migration, Displaced Persons, Migrant Hostels.

Introduction

Australia was an early pioneer in the film industry and, even from the time of Federation in 1901, with the production of the film *Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, Australian Governments were involved in financing and producing documentary style films, many aimed at highlighting Australian identity and way of life.¹ From the 1930s, film was considered for educational purposes in schools; however, it was the effective use of film as a means of instruction, motivation and propaganda in the Second World War that initiated a major focus in the production, content and use of films for this purpose.²

The 1940s and 50s thus saw a dramatic growth in the use of documentary film in schools as Government Education Departments invested significant sums on visual equipment and content, and teachers were instructed in the correct method of using film as an educational medium.³ The extension of the use of film as a didactic tool into the wider community was ensured by the formation of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction (1942) and the establishment, in 1945, of the Australian National Film Board (ANFB), the primary role of which was to:

assist in widening the use of films and other visual aids in our national life and especially in education, rehabilitation, social development, international understanding, trade and tourist expansion and immigration.⁴

¹ Moran, A., *Projecting Australia: Government Film since 1945*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1991, p 1.

² Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Number Autumn, 2007, p 165.

³ Bertrand, I. & Collins, D., *Government and Film in Australia*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1981, pp 81-86.

⁴ National Archives Australia: D1917, D207/45; National Film Board.

Therefore, as Williams asserts, documentary film was inexorably linked to national identity, post-war reconstruction and nation building⁵ so that, by the 1950s, as Bertrand and Collins argue, documentary film was 'accepted in Australia as a proven educator'.⁶ This post-war focus on film as a didactic medium coincided with a period of dramatic change in Australia's immigration landscape with the Australian Government agreeing to resettle large numbers of European Displaced Persons as part of its nation building and humanitarian agendas.

In Europe, at the end of the Second World War, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) officially labelled over eight million people displaced, and, although almost seven million of these would return, or be returned, to their countries of origin, over 1.2 million from a number of ethnic and national origins still remained homeless, stateless and in need of resettlement.⁷ Between 1947 and 1953 over 170,000 of these Displaced Persons (DPs) would migrate to Australia under an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO). These DPs would soon be followed by thousands of other European migrants, many of whom were helped by a series of assisted passage agreements negotiated between Australia and other European nations over the ensuing years. The arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants represented a significant shift in Australia's immigration policy, and key to the

⁵ Williams, D., *Australian Post-War Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors*, Intellect, Bristol UK, 2008, p 13.

⁶ Bertrand, I. & Collins, D., *Government and Film in Australia*, p 91.

⁷ Cohen, G.D., *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, p 5.

acceptance of these migrants was the promise that new arrivals would be carefully selected, and would easily assimilate into the Australian way of life.⁸

Under the policy of assimilation, so called New Australians⁹ were expected to learn English, embrace the values of Australian society, and ultimately become Australian citizens. In order to achieve this goal, the Department of Immigration organised classes in the English language and Australian history and civics. They also sought to engage the Australian population in helping the assimilation process through the specifically established Good Neighbour Movement, local churches, and a large number of other volunteer bodies.¹⁰ These groups were encouraged to mix with the new arrivals, to take them on outings, to help them adjust and to educate them into the Australian way of life. Public involvement was essential, not only because, as Markus and Taft argue, resources were extremely limited, but also because the promise of assimilation was essential in selling the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants to the Australian community.¹¹

⁸ Although the phrase “the Australian way of life” came into regular use in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular in Australia it was never clearly defined. It represented an imagined, quintessentially Australian character and lifestyle. See Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life' in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.) *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953. White, R., 'The Australian Way of Life' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 18, Number 73, 1979.

⁹ The term New Australian was encouraged by Arthur Calwell in an attempt to replace the more common and derogatory terms such as “reffo” and “Balt” and to remind the general public of the fact that these new arrivals would assimilate and become Australians. In time this term also took on negative connotations.

¹⁰ The idea of the Good Neighbour Movement was based on the New Settlers Leagues which had operated in the eastern states of Australia during the 1920s to help British immigrants settle. The Government re-established this organisation in the 1940s and it grew so that, by 1953, there were 95 Good Neighbour branches around Australia, with an estimated 10,000 members co-ordinating the work of over 100,000 volunteers from a significant and diverse range of voluntary organisations. National Archives Australia: D400, SA1956/8959; *Assimilation General Monthly Reports*. For more information on this organisation see for example Tavan, G., 'Good neighbours': Community organisations, migrant assimilation and Australian society and culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997.

¹¹ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015.

All refugee and assisted arrivals were housed, for varying lengths of time, in a system of migrant accommodation centres. These centres, located throughout Australia, provided very basic accommodation, Australian food served cafeteria style and large institutional shared bathrooms and laundries.¹² It can be argued that these centres provided a unique environment, a type of liminal space, where migrants could be exposed, through a variety of more, or less, subtle methods, to the Australian way of life and begin the process of assimilation into Australian society.¹³

This paper examines one of these subtle means of assimilation, the screening of carefully selected feature and documentary films within the centres. It will use archival evidence to explore the way film was used to assist in assimilating non-English speaking migrants in the early years (1947-1955) of the Australian mass migration scheme. Although we do not know the precise impact of targeted film in shaping migrant perceptions,¹⁴ this paper will show that for the Department of Immigration, both documentary and feature films had a definite role in the assimilation of New Australians into the Australian way of life, especially in the migrant accommodation centres. It will argue that documentaries were not only used to support the teaching of the English language, but that the content of such films was used to inculcate Australian culture and civics in the migrant

¹² The first of these centres were the Reception and Training Centres which generally made use of ex-army camps. These were followed by a variety of workers camps for male breadwinners and Holding Centres for the dependent women and children. Finally, a third tier of centres were established, the Migrant Hostels, which generally catered for assisted migrant families, although they did occasionally house single male and female migrants.

¹³ See for example Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through play: migrant hostel play centres in post-War Australia' in *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016. Agutter, K. & Kevin, C., 'The 'unwanted' and 'non-compliants': 'Unsupported mothers' as 'failures' and agents in Australia's migrant holding centres' in *The History of the Family*, Volume DOI 10.1080/1081602X.2017.1302891, 2017.

¹⁴ King, R. & Wood, N., 'Media and Migration an Overview' in King, R. & Wood, N. (eds.) *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, Routledge, London, 2001, p 3.

population. Similarly, while feature films were shown for their entertainment value, official correspondence about the selection of films to be shown indicates that consideration was also always given to their didactic properties, especially in regard to language, and to their cultural appropriateness.

Film in Post-War Australia

The Australian public embraced cinema going during the Second World War with attendances peaking in 1945.¹⁵ Although there was a slight downturn in cinema attendance after the war, film admissions still accounted for the vast majority of the revenue paid under the Commonwealth Entertainment Tax¹⁶ and Smyth estimates that in 1950 there were 145 million cinema admissions from a total Australian population of just over eight million.¹⁷ In the official book to celebrate the Jubilee of Federation in 1951, David McNicol noted that Australians had become

a race of inveterate picture goers. Great movie palaces soared in the capitals and every country town and village had its show – ranging from modern, well-designed theatres to single-projection boxes installed in the Mechanics' Institutes.¹⁸

Seeking to leverage the popularity of film in this period, the newly formed Department of Immigration quickly established its own publicity section which worked in collaboration with the ANFB, the Australian National Information

¹⁵ Bertrand, I. (ed.) *Cinema in Australia a Documentary History*, New South Wales University Press, New South Wales, 1989, p 209.

¹⁶ Bertrand, I. (ed.) *Cinema in Australia a Documentary History*, p 209.

¹⁷ Smyth, T.M., *Economic Aspects of Film Distribution and Exhibition in Australia*, Masters Thesis, School of Economics, University of New South Wales, 1976, p 20.

¹⁸ McNicoll, D., 'Entertainment' in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.) *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, p 63.

Bureau (ANIB), and other agencies to produce films specifically targeted at assimilating new arrivals and educating Australians about the essential role immigration was playing in Australia's future.¹⁹ As one Department of Information memo stated; these films were 'intended to introduce sympathetically, Balt migrants to Australians, so that ... [they] may understand that these newcomers are people of a kind who will take readily to our way of life' – they are, it suggested, readily assimilable, highly cultured and “most acceptable”.²⁰

One such film, *No Strangers Here*, telling the story of a family of DPs who came to Australia, was shown extensively in commercial theatres and to other audiences through volunteer and church groups.²¹ In accordance with the broader objective of conditioning the Australian public, the intent of this film was explicitly stated as ‘to acquaint the Australian public with the peculiar problems confronting new arrivals and to win their sympathy in helping migrants in their initial difficulties’.²² The strength of this aim is evident in discussions which indicate that the Department of Information was determined that the assimilation message would not be sacrificed for ‘the sake of making profits on the film’.²³

Although films such as this played an important role in the education of the Australian public (one of the key tenets of the policy of assimilation) this paper is particularly focussed on the use of film as a direct agent in assisting the

¹⁹ Haebich, A., 'Retro-assimilation', p 165.

²⁰ National Archives Australia: A438, 1949/7/988; Publicity Films - For use in Displaced Persons Camps Overseas.

²¹ National Archives Australia: A1838, 862/24/1; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural assimilation of immigrants. Please note that this film is available via the National Film and Sound Archives YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGqCCG4uehs> (last accessed 13 March 2017).

²² National Archives Australia: A1838, 862/24/1.

²³ National Archives Australia: A445, 261/5/1; Assimilation film 'No strangers here'.

assimilation of new arrivals. For those interested in the broader context I direct readers to the scholarship footnoted below.²⁴

The Use of Film in Language Classes

Acquisition of the English language was a fundamental component of assimilation and classes were established in the DP camps in Europe, conducted on board ship, provided in the migrant accommodation centres, and continued through radio and correspondence courses after the migrants had moved into the wider community. Within the accommodation centres, teachers were required to teach six days per week and classes were divided into: instruction in language; application of the language through word games, reading and general discussion; instruction on the Australian way of life; and visual education by means of documentary films.²⁵

Contemporary records indicate that the films and film strips²⁶ shown in class were primarily those made by the Department of Education for use in the primary school Social Studies curriculum. Even though these films were aimed at young children they were considered appropriate for adult migrant classes because of their use of simple English and their relevant subject matter. Through images and narrations, in films such as *How Heavy? How Long? How much?*, *The Commonwealth Savings Bank*, and *Railway Travel*, migrants were exposed, not only to the English language, but also to everyday activities they would need to master to live in the community. Furthermore, the Department of Immigration

²⁴ Much has been written elsewhere on various films that were used to educate the Australian public. For example see Williams, D., *Australian Post-War Documentary Film*. And Kuo, L., *Migration Documentary Films in Post-War Australia*, Cambria Press, New York, 2010.

²⁵ Martin, S., *New Life New Language: The history of the Adult Migrant English Program*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney, 2002, p 6.

²⁶ A film strip is a series of images arranged in a sequential order, played through a film projector and generally accompanied by a separate recorded or read narration

determined that by showing and discussing films such as *Good Health*, new arrivals could be introduced to broader behavioural and social expectations, particularly around manners, health and hygiene. In a similarly educational approach, *Our Policemen* aimed to show new arrivals that the policeman in Australia, perhaps unlike those in the country of origin, was a friend and protector, a person to be respected.²⁷

These films were as much an instruction in civics, culture and the Australian way of life as lessons in the English language. Furthermore, given the limited resources and finances available for assimilation, the use of these already available films was seen as a particularly cost effective means of introducing Australian ways and generally helping to educate new arrivals.²⁸

Documentary Film and Assimilation

In addition to films produced specifically for education purposes, a variety of other documentary films were used during language classes, and these same films were also screened in special showings and alongside feature films in the large makeshift theatres in the accommodation centres. Centres were instructed that two, three or four documentary films should be shown together regularly in the cinema hall in the evenings, although centre managers were warned that they ‘may get some criticism about turning a film evening into a teaching period ... [however they were advised] you should take no notice of this’.²⁹

²⁷ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1950, p 40.

²⁸ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/1/18 PART 1 Migrant education - General - Education in immigration centres

²⁹ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/21/8 PART 1; Migrant Education - teaching techniques and materials - teaching methods – general.

As Kuo notes, the documentaries produced in this post-war period were particularly nationalistic, promoted a general civic consciousness and aimed to mould the Australian nation during a period of reconstruction.³⁰ Among the most prominent of the educational documentaries in this period was the *Australian Diary* series produced by the ANFB and screened in cinemas across the country as well as on migrant ships and in the migrant accommodation centres. The ANFB also made a number of other ten minute films around the theme of nation building. By the end of 1953 the ANFB had made over 150 films and 72 issues in the *Australian Diary* series.³¹

Alongside these ANFB produced general release documentaries, the Department of Immigration also commissioned a number of films specifically for the purpose of attracting immigrants to Australia. Director Catherine Duncan was engaged to make the first three films in the *Australia Your Future* series. Although *Men Wanted*, *This is Life* and *Christmas Under the Sun* (all 1947) were originally aimed at attracting British migrants, after the signing of the IRO agreement they were also used to educate New Australian arrivals within the accommodation centres. According to the Minister for Immigration, showing these films, the *Australian Diary* series and other ANFB films to DPs and European migrants ensured that new arrivals learnt enough about the Australian way of life 'to enable them to become happy and co-operative members of the community'.³²

Before moving on to discuss, in more detail, examples of the films shown within the migrant centres it is important to comment on what documentaries tell us

³⁰ Kuo, L., *Migration Documentary Films in Post-War Australia*, p 20.

³¹ Moran, A., 'Nation building: The post-war documentary in Australia (1945-1953)' in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1988, p 62.

³² The Commonwealth Office of Education, *Education News*, Volume 2, Number 2, 1949, p 4.

about the society of the time. It can be said that these films are not true reflections but rather are 'largely characterised by creativity, dramatisation, and fiction in the production process'.³³ Indeed, Catherine Duncan herself stated that

[s]ometimes, after seeing a programme of documentary films produced by the Australian National Film Board, I have been tempted to make yet another film under the title of *As Others See Us* ... matched with images more closely conforming to reality - overcrowding in the cities and lack of suitable accommodation for thousands of families; soil erosion helped along by the sheep; strikes; shortage of man-power and, of course, Melbourne rain. For like all countries we have our problems, too, in Australia, problems which are seldom allowed to enter the film's garden of Eden.³⁴

However, the intent in showing these films to New Australians was to accustom them to their future in Australia, idealised or not, and to emphasise their potential future role working to reconstruct the nation. They were also used to educate new arrivals in the Australian way of life, which was, as already stated, a particularly ambiguous concept centred around notions of the nuclear family, an outdoor lifestyle, mateship and a fair go. The concept paid homage both to Australia's increasing suburban lifestyle, as well as recognising our bush origins. The first three 16mm films secured for use at Bonegilla, the largest and longest operating of the DP Reception and Training Centres, were *Fighting Fish*, *The Bushman Goes Home* and *Beekeeping on the Move*.³⁵

³³ Kuo, L., *Migration Documentary Films in Post-War Australia*, p 6.

³⁴ Duncan, C., 'As Others See Us' in *Sight and Sound*, Volume 17, Number 63, 1948, p 12.

³⁵ National Archives Australia: A443, 1951/15/4688; Bonegilla Centre - Cinema facilities.

After a period of “reception and training” at centres such as Bonegilla, DPs were allocated to work as part of their compulsory two year work contract under the IRO agreement.³⁶ While some of these migrants would be allocated to work in the cities and smaller towns, a vast majority would find themselves in manual labour positions on infrastructure projects such as the Trans Australian Railway, or as agricultural labourers on farms and stations. For the vast majority of these ex city dwellers, rural Australia was particularly unknown and therefore *The Bushman Goes Home*³⁷ was considered an especially important film to introduce “station life”.³⁸ The film however, was much more than this, as, through the bushman’s visit to the city, the migrant was introduced to the vast contrasts of urban and rural Australia, to the distances and wide open spaces, the outdoor life style of children swimming in the nearby idyllic river, the heroic bushman reminiscent of the wild west horseman, and to the importance of hard work. This, like other films about the lives of workers, such as *The Cane Cutters* (1948)³⁹, and *Gold Town* (1949), not only introduced new arrivals to the work they were likely to be employed at, but, more importantly, emphasised the importance of this labour to the Australian nation and, as Moran argues, to the glorious heroism of such workers in the reconstruction of the nation post-war.⁴⁰ New migrants were

³⁶ For more on the work contracts see Dellios, A., 'Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 40, Number 4, 2016. And Agutter, K., 'Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System' in Kleinig, M.A. & Richards, E. (eds.) *On the Wing: Mobility Before and After Emigration to Australia, Visible Immigrants Vol 7*, Anchor Books Australia, Spit Junction, NSW 2013.

³⁷ This film is available through the National Film and Sound Archives YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jilE16IZFq8> (last accessed 15 March 2017)

³⁸ National Archives Australia: MP275/1, 1953/1067; Migrant assimilation - English language courses.

³⁹ This film is available at the National Sound and Film Archive YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2D3ioAH6_4 (last accessed 15 March 2017)

⁴⁰ Moran, A., *Projecting Australia*, p 37.

essential workers in future Australia, potentially part of a united nation of individuals.

Like their parents, young migrants were also the target of specially selected “suitable” films to aid in their assimilation. For example, in December 1950, the Officer in Charge of the Bonegilla Centre suggested that, as migrant youth were usually only considered as part of a family group, less consideration had been given to their assimilation. Film, he went on, could provide ‘an excellent opportunity to plant the seeds of assimilation into the minds of the junior boys and girls who have little to do ... when they are not attending English lessons’. Films, he emphasised, ‘with a very definite slant on youth assimilation and our Australian way of life’, could be of great benefit.⁴¹

Feature Films

Having established a culture of documentary films for assimilation and education purposes, the Department of Immigration also looked to showing feature films in the accommodation centres as part of a wider program of organised entertainment and assimilation.⁴² The Department hired films from companies such as MGM, Columbia and 16mm Australia Pty Ltd. These films were then sent around the country, usually by train, for screening at the various centres. The rental charge for feature films was constantly under debate and the Department continually negotiated for the best deal to keep costs down. Their persistence, and the money

⁴¹ National Archives Australia: MP607, 1959/3608; Committee on ‘assimilation and progress of young migrants (to 18 years) in Australian community’ – established by commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council – seeking information,.

⁴² National Archives Australia; A443, 1951/15/4688. A variety of activities were regularly included on the centre calendars including dances and sporting events where new arrivals mixed with people from the local community. See for example Keating, C., *A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta, New South Wales, 1939-1960*, Uri Windt, Burwood New South Wales, 1997.

outlaid on the purchase and maintenance of equipment and the hire and logistics of transporting these films, is testament to their determination to make films available to new arrivals.⁴³ Initially, feature films were shown for free, however, in 1950, it was decided that, to offset some of the costs, films shown in the longer term centres (Hostels and Holding Centres) would be shown for a small ticket fee, while those for the Reception and Training Centres would remain free.⁴⁴ Providing free films for DPs was partially in response to their refugee origins and lack of financial means, however, as they received a weekly social security payment, it is also evident that the Department of Immigration saw a particular advantage to their attending cinema screenings.

Feature films were generally shown two, three and even four nights per week in the large halls within the grounds of the centres or occasionally, weather permitting, also out of doors in centres such as at Woodside in South Australia and at Wacol in Queensland.⁴⁵ Many of the large Reception and Training Centres accommodated 2,000 people or more and, as a consequence, audiences were often very large. For example, on 20 May 1950 at Bonegilla, 1650 people watched *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Person-oddity* and *Good Dog*. The cinema nights were certainly very popular and as the Director of the Woodside Centre (which at this time had a capacity of just over 2,000) stated in 1949 the audience is ‘never below 500 and sometimes 1500’.⁴⁶

Great care was taken in the choice of films shown, with an officer appointed to approve all films before they were sent to the centres. For example, war films,

⁴³ For an example of the ongoing discussions re the cost and negotiations of hiring feature films see National Archives Australia: A445, 220/2/2; Films for Migrant Centres Part 2.

⁴⁴ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/2/5; Cinema equipment at Migrant Centres. Part 2.

⁴⁵ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/2/3; Films for migrant centres Part 3.

⁴⁶ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

particularly those which referred to Germany, were not shown. Furthermore, when 16mm Australia suggested that *Mr Emmanuel* was suitable for screening, the Department noted that, as is was the ‘story of a Jew who whilst visiting Germany in about 1938-39 became involved in the Gestapo beaten and maltreated [sic]’, it would not be shown. They promptly informed the company that a ‘film of this nature is completely unsuited for screening to any migrant audience ... and it is suggested that unless a complete change of attitude by this company is adopted it would be better that their contract be terminated’.⁴⁷ There was, apparently, some consideration given to the past experiences of these European migrants.



Children leaving the cinema hall, Greta Migrant Camp Collection, Image no. c03,

Provided courtesy of Newcastle Region Library. Circa 1958

Care was also taken in the vetting of the films shown for migrant children at Saturday afternoon matinee sessions. Once again, a Department of Immigration

⁴⁷ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

officer was appointed to view, report on, and approve all films shown. In his report on *Circus Boy* and *The Secret Tunnel*, for example, the officer gave a brief synopsis of the films and then noted that

the main roles were acted by children ... *Circus Boy* contains actual circus performances which would be appreciated by children of all ages, while *Secret Tunnel* would be suitable for those 10 and up ... [the films are] well presented, the screen images being very clear and the dialogue easily understood. The films are good entertainment and would be fully appreciated by children.⁴⁸

The intent was that films for children should be both entertaining but also useful for hearing and learning the English language. As Jean Craig explains, migrants of all ages and sexes enjoyed the cinema as they were familiar with it – ‘it is one of the few recreational activities common to both Europe and Australia’.⁴⁹ Craig also noted that,

many immigrants claim that the cinema improves their English; they feel that it is a less painful method of gaining familiarity with the sound of the language than mixing socially with English speaking persons.⁵⁰

This view is supported in a letter to *The New Australian* from DP Paulis Purkalitis, resident of Bonegilla, who said he enjoyed the cinema and the

⁴⁸ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

⁴⁹ Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants: A study in role assumption and fulfilment*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1954, p 252. Craig is the maiden name of Jean Martin, often considered to be the founder of sociology in Australia. Martin spent many decades studying European migrants and DPs in particular.

⁵⁰ Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants*, p 252.

'[p]ictures are not only for amusement but they are very important for learning better English'.⁵¹ Oral interviews also indicate the didactic properties of feature films. One 16 year old Dutch migrant from the Woodside Centre noted that

they didn't have any subtitles and so, and when I first arrived here, the first three months you know English was so poor and you couldn't understand, and when you watched a film like, a cowboy film like John Wayne, and I always had to make sure I'd be sitting alongside a boy that's been here at least two or three years longer than I have and he could speak English, and I'd have to sort of nudge him and say "What did he say, what did he say" ... But you soon, when you're young, you soon do learn a second language.⁵²

The fact that feature films could be used to aid in the acquisition of the English language was frequently noted by the Department of Immigration and various centre managers. In a letter to the Department of Immigration's education section, for example, the manager of the Bathurst Centre suggested that films should no longer be obtained from MGM because they generally supplied older films, and the soundtrack was not as clear as it should be, making it harder for migrants to learn the language.⁵³ Sound quality was often a problem, particularly as the films were shown to such large audiences in cavernous buildings not designed as

⁵¹ National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 021.192 PART 1; Immigration - 'The New Australian' - Letters from readers - Part 1. Note – the monthly newspaper, *The New Australian*, was introduced by the Department of Immigration in January 1949. Written in simple English, the aim of the publication was to aid in the assimilation of new arrivals. Migrant readers were encouraged to write to the Department to tell their stories, and to ask questions.

⁵² J & B DW, interviewed 30 July 2013. This research is part of the larger "Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants" which is an Australian Research Council-funded Linkage project (University of Adelaide). Hostel Stories has received over 600 registrations of interest and conducted over 90 oral interviews with former migrants who went through the South Australian hostels. Oral histories (audio files and transcripts) will be deposited at the State Library of South Australia at the conclusion of the project; references are to initials and date of interview.

⁵³ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

cinemas. In May 1950, the problems with the acoustics at the Woodside Centre meant that many films were very difficult to hear and understand and this was not considered ideal for the migrant's enjoyment or potential English language acquisition. As a consequence of reports like this from centres around the county, the Department of Immigration sought advice from a variety of experts and new sound equipment was purchased with the Department acquiring new horns for Bonegilla⁵⁴ and a whole new sound system for Woodside, at the considerable cost of £120.⁵⁵

Alongside the general sound quality, there was also considerable discussion about the origins of feature films. If the intent was to teach Australian ways and the English language, then, as the manager of the Bathurst Centre stated, 'the American intonation and accent of most of the M.G.M. films were undesirable models for persons learning English'.⁵⁶ Jean Craig agreed, stating that, in addition, 'American films could not be expected to help [migrants] ... understand Australian institutions'.⁵⁷ Given the strong British underpinnings of the Australian way of life the solution to this problem, of course, lay in the showing of more films from studios such as Ealing and distributors such as Gaumont British Films, although care was still taken to exclude films that might contain strong regional English dialects.⁵⁸

Despite the didactic intent, feature films were primarily entertainment, and the DPs and other European migrants were described, by the manager of the Cowra

⁵⁴ Letter from KG Phillips, Manager of Viz-Ed Equipment to Department of Immigration, 28 April 1949 in National Archives Australia; A443, 1951/15/4688.

⁵⁵ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/3.

⁵⁶ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

⁵⁷ Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants*, p 276.

⁵⁸ National Archives Australia: A1361, 33/3/3 PART 1; *Migrant Education - Copies of letters written from Migrant Camps to other bodies.*

Centre, as a 'very critical and knowledgeable audience'.⁵⁹ Certainly they were always willing to express their preferences and centre managers reports indicate that the 'audience has a decided preference for the musical comedy type of film' and an 'occasional action picture, such as - Caravan, is also appreciated' (Bathurst Centre 1949).⁶⁰ Maria Rudowicz, a DP from the West Sale Centre, remembers that the entertainment films were the most popular, especially westerns as, although a 'lot of people did not understand the dialogue of the films ... [they] were easily carried along with the action and drama of the wild west'.⁶¹ It must have been pleasing for Department Officials concerned with assimilation to hear from the Rushworth Centre that the residents there preferred films which included Australian content and the preference was, in order, '(i) Musical (ii) (a) Educational Australian (b) Colored Scenics [sic] (iii) Comedy for Juveniles (shorts) (iv) Gazettes Australian'.⁶²

Conclusion

As Mary Tomsic notes, in considering how people remember film, '[t]he cinema is more than a place where moving pictures are seen; it is a site of entertainment and importantly, a public place of social interaction ... it is both physically present in people's lives and remains alive in their memories'.⁶³ This ability of film to enter into, and be retained in memory, is of course one of the reasons that authorities sought to use it as an assimilationist tool in the post war mass migration period. Many of the migrants interviewed for the Hostel Stories Project

⁵⁹ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

⁶⁰ National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

⁶¹ Quoted in Synan, A., *We Came With Nothing: Story of the West Sale Migrant Holding Centre*, Lookups Research, Sale, Victoria, 2002, p 56.

⁶² National Archives Australia; A445, 220/2/2.

⁶³ Tomsic, M., 'Women's Memories of Cinema-Going: More than 'The Only Thing Left to do' in Victoria's Western District' in *History Australia*, Volume 2, Number 1, 2005, p 6.1.

at Adelaide University remember the centre cinemas and still comment today, ‘we would watch the, all the latest films ... a huge cinema and of course when Elvis Presley would come on, I think it was Jailhouse Rock, I’ll never forget that ... and when the Looney Tunes would come on ... so all the Donald Duck and Pluto and all those’.⁶⁴

Given the general lack of resources available in this period, the unique environment of the post-war migrant accommodation centres provided an exceptional opportunity to reach large numbers of migrants with material acquired, specifically designed, or carefully selected to aid their transition to an Australian way of life. Of course, measuring the actual impact of this one element of the broader training and assimilation program undertaken in the migrant accommodation centres is extremely difficult, and even the numerous oral histories taken as part of this research have only provided inconclusive evidence of effectiveness. What is beyond doubt however is just how much effort and thought went into the selection (and production) of appropriate material to advance the process of inculcating the Australian way of life into new migrant arrivals.

Bibliography

Agutter, K., 'Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System', in Kleinig, M.A. & Richards, E. (eds.), *On the Wing: Mobility before and after Emigration to Australia, Visible Immigrants Vol 7*, Anchor Books Australia, Spit Junction, NSW 2013, pp 136-52.

Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia' in *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016, pp 277-91.

⁶⁴ J & B DW, interviewed 30 July 2013.

- Agutter, K. & Kevin, C., 'The 'Unwanted' and 'Non-Compliant': 'Unsupported Mothers' as 'Failures' and Agents in Australia's Migrant Holding Centres' in *The History of the Family*, Volume DOI 10.1080/1081602X.2017.1302891, 2017.
- Bertrand, I. (ed.), *Cinema in Australia a Documentary History*, New South Wales University Press, New South Wales, 1989.
- Bertrand, I. & Collins, D., *Government and Film in Australia*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1981.
- Cohen, G.D., *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.
- Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants: A Study in Role Assumption and Fulfilment*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1954.
- Dellios, A., 'Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 40, Number 4, 2016, pp 418-32.
- Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1950.
- Duncan, C., 'As Others See Us' in *Sight and Sound*, Volume 17, Number 63, 1948, pp 12-14.
- Haebich, A., 'Retro-Assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Number Autumn, 2007, pp 162-72.
- Keating, C., *A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta, New South Wales, 1939-1960*, Uri Windt, Burwood New South Wales, 1997.
- King, R. & Wood, N., 'Media and Migration an Overview', in King, R. & Wood, N. (eds.), *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp 1-22.
- Kuo, L., *Migration Documentary Films in Post-War Australia*, Cambria Press, New York, 2010.
- Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015, pp 234-51.
- Martin, S., *New Life New Language: The History of the Adult Migrant English Program*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney, 2002.
- McNicoll, D., 'Entertainment', in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.), *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, pp 62-65.

- Moran, A., 'Nation Building: The Post- War Documentary in Australia (1945-1953)' in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1988, pp 57-79.
- Moran, A., *Projecting Australia: Government Film since 1945*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1991.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 261/5/1**, Assimilation Film 'No Strangers Here'.
- National Archives Australia: **D400; SA1956/8959**, Assimilation General Monthly Reports.
- National Archives Australia: **A443; 1951/15/4688**, Bonegilla Centre - Cinema Facilities.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/2/5**, Cinema Equipment at Migrant Centres. Part 2.
- National Archives Australia: **MP607; 1959/3608**, Committee on 'Assimilation and Progress of Young Migrants (to 18 Years) in Australian Community' – Established by Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council – Seeking Information,.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/2/2**, Films for Migrant Centres Part 2.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/2/3**, Films for Migrant Centres Part 3.
- National Archives Australia: **CP815/1; 021.192 PART 1**, Immigration - 'the New Australian' - Letters from Readers - Part 1.
- National Archives Australia: **MP275/1; 1953/1067**, Migrant Assimilation - English Language Courses.
- National Archives Australia: **A1361; 33/3/3 PART 1**, Migrant Education - Copies of Letters Written from Migrant Camps to Other Bodies.
- National Archives Australia: **A1361; 33/1/18 PART 1** Migrant Education - General - Education in Immigration Centres
- National Archives Australia: **A1361; 33/21/8 PART 1**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials - Teaching Methods – General.
- National Archives Australia: **D1917; D207/45**, National Film Board.
- National Archives Australia: **A438; 1949/7/988**, Publicity Films - for Use in Displaced Persons Camps Overseas.
- National Archives Australia: **A1838; 862/24/1**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural Assimilation of Immigrants.

- Smyth, T.M., *Economic Aspects of Film Distribution and Exhibition in Australia*, Masters Thesis, School of Economics, University of New South Wales, 1976.
- Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 3-14.
- Synan, A., *We Came with Nothing: Story of the West Sale Migrant Holding Centre*, Lookups Research, Sale, Victoria, 2002.
- Tavan, G., 'Good Neighbours': Community Organisations, Migrant Assimilation and Australian Society and Culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, pp 77-89.
- Tomsic, M., 'Women's Memories of Cinema-Going: More Than 'the Only Thing Left to Do' in Victoria's Western District' in *History Australia*, Volume 2, Number 1, 2005, pp 6.1-6.12.
- White, R., 'The Australian Way of Life' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 18, Number 73, 1979, pp 528-45.
- Williams, D., *Australian Post-War Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors*, Intellect, Bristol UK, 2008.

Chapter 9 Article 4: Her Majesty's Newest Subjects: National Celebrations
as Migrant Assimilationist Tools

The following article, submitted to *History Australia* highlights how national celebrations were used as assimilationist tools in the hostel especially through the mixing of migrants and old Australians and through the imposition of Australian values and links to Britain and the Queen.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title of Paper | Her Majesty's Newest Subjects: Assimilating non-English speaking migrants in post-war Australia |
| Publication Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Published <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Submitted to History Australia May 2017 |

Principal Author

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | |
| Contribution to the Paper | This paper is based on my own original research is wholly my own work | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 100% | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | |
| Signature | | Date 8-5-17 |

Her Majesty's Newest Subjects: Assimilating non-English speaking migrants in post-war Australia

Abstract

Following World War Two Australia, accepted large numbers of Europeans as part of a mass immigration program which would completely change the face of the nation. Key to the “success” of these non-English speaking arrivals was the policy of assimilation. Although learning English was a fundamental requirement to participating in the “Australian way of life”, so too was the mixing of “old” and “new” Australians and an understanding of Australian history and civics. This paper examines the role of national events, particularly Queen Elizabeth's Coronation and the 1954 Royal Tour, in the Department of Immigration's attempts to assimilate new arrivals.

Keywords: Assimilation, Royal Tours, Migration, Displaced Persons, Migrant Hostels

Introduction

‘These kings of England. I don’t see the point’.

‘That’s our history, Frank. That’s where we come from’.

‘I don’t’. Before he’d come here, he’d never even heard of The Royal Family.

Here, they were everywhere. Mugs, pencil cases, newspaper headlines. The

King Dies. The Coronation. The Royal Visit. They were like film stars.

‘But you’re in the British Empire now! She’s our Queen too’.¹

In December 1947, the first party of 839 European Displaced Persons (DPs) disembarked in Melbourne. Over the next five years Australia would receive over 170,000 DPs who would soon be joined by a growing number of other migrants arriving under negotiated assisted passage agreements, as Australia sought to grow its population and economy by widening its immigrant net geographically across Europe. Between January 1947 and the end of 1954, over half a million migrants arrived in Australia and more than half of these were not British born.

The arrival of non-English speaking migrants marked a significant shift in policy, away from the dominance of, and preference towards, British migrants, and key to the acceptance of these so called “New Australians” was the policy of assimilation.² Australians were assured that all newcomers would willingly meld

¹ This is a fictional conversation between Frank, a young displaced person from Europe and his teacher in Australia in London, J., *The Golden Age*, Vintage, Sydney, 2014, p 75.

² The term “New Australian” was coined by Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell in the late 1940s in an attempt to deter the use of the pejorative titles “Balts” and “Reffos” (short for refugees) being applied to new arrivals. It also fitted with the wider rhetoric of the assimilationist policy of the day. The term “New Australian” soon took on its own derogatory connotations. In this paper I use the capitalised term New Australian to refer to recent migrant arrival rather than in the pejorative sense discussed above.

into the Australian way of life and become, in the words of the Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell, ‘an integral part of our nation’.³

The phrase “Australian way of life”, coined in the 1940s, came into regular use in Australia in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular to the extent that, as Richard White argues, ‘a columnist could complain that she was “sick and tired of hearing people bleating about The Australian Way of Life”’.⁴ Despite the term’s popularity, it was never clearly defined, and its usefulness often lay in its vague and opaque nature.⁵ Writing in 1953, Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner argued that this phrase was

a piece of shorthand in which we try to assess the final balance of our history, our struggle and our achievement, something much deeper than words can depict. It suggests a characteristically Australian style of outlook, conduct and character, setting us apart from others, and based in some way on inner principle.⁶

Accordingly, in Caiger's 1953 edited collection *The Australian Way of Life*⁷, the typical Australian was described with adjectives such as generous, humorous and sport loving. His society was egalitarian, his home was suburban and orientated around the traditional nuclear family⁸ and despite this individuality of outlook and

³ Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, speech made to the First Australian Citizenship Convention 1950. Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Canberra, 1950, p 3.

⁴ White quoting Elizabeth Webb Stet Brisbane 1950. See White, R., *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1981, p 158.

⁵ White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, p 160.

⁶ Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life' in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.) *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, p 3.

⁷ This book was the first of a series of books published by UNESCO in the 'Way of Life Series' which included other nations such as Norway. Caiger, G. (ed.) *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953.

⁸ Eggleston, F.W., 'The Australian Nation' in Caiger, G. (ed.) *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953, p 13.

character, there remained, at the heart of this ideal, the notion of Australia as loyal to mother England and the Royal Family.⁹ As Mark McKenna argues, the monarchy's influence on the Australian '*mentalité*' is indelible, like the ubiquitous portrait of the reigning Monarch that once adorned the foyers and meeting rooms of so many public and private institutions¹⁰, including the public spaces of the migrant accommodation centres that were the first living places of most newly arrived migrants.¹¹ This loyalty to the monarchy was also evident in voluntary and community organisations that were tasked with the assimilation of new arrivals and in the official commemorative publication of the 1951 Jubilee of Federation which, even when celebrating this Australian anniversary, emphasised that Britain was still "home" to Australians, and that their 'loyalty to the Royal Family and to the British Commonwealth of Nations is so self-evident that it is rarely a matter for discussion'.¹²

Working from this ambiguous ideal of an Australian way of life, new arrivals (and DPs in particular as the first mass arrival of non-English speaking people) were expected to assimilate into the wider community, including embracing links to Britain and the Royal family. Migrant allegiance to the monarchy was thus deemed an essential element of assimilation. As the Director of the Woodside Migrant Accommodation Centre stated at the opening of the on-site school in

⁹ Eggleston, 'The Australian Nation', p 6.

¹⁰ McKenna, M., 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference' in Schreuder, D.M. & Ward, S. (eds.) *Australia's Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p 263.

¹¹ Initially DPs were housed in Reception and Training Centres such as Bonegilla. Once breadwinners were allocated to work they were housed in a variety of work camps and workers hostels while their dependants (women and children) were sent to Holding Centres such as Benalla and Woodside. These centres were generally established in ex-Army camps. Alongside of these were a number of "purpose built" (often using Nissen huts) migrant hostels which also housed assisted European migrants. By the early 1950s there were over 90 accommodation centres around Australia.

¹² Barcs, E., 'The Australian Way of Life' in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.) *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, p 42.

1949, the teachers' task was to 'weld our little friends into true Australians. To imbue them with a love for our King and the Royal Family and instill in them a love for our beautiful country'.¹³

For many migrants however, the idea of the monarchy was often an alien concept; a notion which had to be learned or relearned. As Rivett explains, many migrants came to Australia with an experience of a monarchy which was 'reactionary, anti-working class, opposed to reform and generally very close to the officer caste in the army'.¹⁴ Others had no experience of a royal family at all and were puzzled by the Australian public's often overt feelings towards a sovereign who lived on the other side of the world.¹⁵ Nevertheless, as *The New Australian* explained, for migrants 'to understand the Australian people and their British way of life [they] must understand the high regard which they have for their monarchy',¹⁶ and certainly the events of the next few years would give migrants ample opportunity to learn more.

This paper contends that the fortuitous proximity of a sequence of events, in the early years of the mass migration program, which included the 1951 Jubilee of Federation, the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and the 1954 Royal Tour of Australia provided a unique opportunity for immigration authorities to inculcate this aspect of Australian culture in new arrivals as part of the broader

¹³ National Archives Australia: A445, 220/35/21; Woodside centre - establishment of State school etc.

¹⁴ Rivett, R., 'The Monarchy and the Migrant' in Dutton, G. (ed.) *Australia and the Monarchy: A Symposium*, Sun Books, Melbourne, Australia, 1966, p 69.

¹⁵ Rivett, 'The Monarchy and the Migrant', p 69.

¹⁶ *The New Australian* (later *The Good Neighbour*) was introduced in 1949 and was produced monthly for the Department of Immigration by the News and Information Bureau of the Department of the Interior. Heavily illustrated and written in simple English, it was used by the Department of Immigration to help assimilate European migrants. Each month covered topics such as the requirements of law, how to be successful in their new life, monthly lessons in English, guidance on bushfires and safety in the bush etc. *The New Australian*, Canberra, February 1952, 'Death of the King', pp 1-4.

assimilation agenda, as well as break down barriers in the Australian public towards the acceptance of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants. It further contends that the efficacy of this particular path towards assimilation was enhanced by the fact that DPs and other assisted European migrants were initially housed in communal migrant accommodation centres which provided an important and controlled environment to facilitate assimilation through education in the Australian way of life and the mixing of old and New Australians through organised community programs and visits.

To arrive at this conclusion, this paper first considers the long standing scholarly debate about the nature and application of assimilation policies in Australia before addressing the role of national ceremonial events in shaping common cultural norms and collective identity. With this background, I then consider the specific events mentioned above, and how each of them built upon the other to facilitate the two-way process of assimilation that was key to the government policy of the time.

The Assimilation Debate and the Role of National Events

Although the goal of assimilation of new arrivals was common to immigrant nations globally in the post-World War Two period, the term itself is difficult to define, as the aims and expectations which underpinned it were, and remain subjective. Dictionary definitions generally describe assimilation as a process whereby a minority group adapts or changes to meet the customs and attitudes of the prevailing society. Certainly, psychologist Ronald Taft's definition of assimilation as a 'process whereby the immigrants and the native population

become more alike as a result of interaction'¹⁷, appears to run parallel to the Australian Department of Immigration's belief at the time that assimilation should be a two-way process where old and New Australians would learn from each other by mixing.¹⁸ In practice of course, as Murphy argues, this approach largely required that 'the behaviour and aspirations of migrants ... converge with a common white, and largely middle class, imagining of the nation'.¹⁹

Irrespective of definition, scholars have long debated the mechanisms of, and impact the policy of assimilation had in the settlement of new arrivals in Australia in the immediate post-war years. Early discussions highlighted conflicting beliefs. Dr Kajica Milanov, himself a DP, argued for active assimilation, claiming that it was wrong and potentially dangerous to assume that assimilation would come naturally over time, as he likened the growing number of unassimilated migrants to 'a foreign body inside the Australian national organism'.²⁰ By contrast, psychiatrist H.B.M. Murphy's report on DPs in Australia was highly critical of the nation's policy of rapid assimilation and the strain it placed on new arrivals.²¹ The lack of a clear understanding of what the policy meant was also evident during a 1952 ABC radio debate, entitled 'What do we mean by assimilation of

¹⁷ Taft, R., *From Stranger to Citizen: A Survey of Studies of Immigrant Assimilation in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands Western Australia, 1965, p 4. It is also important to note that in the wider context of this period of Australian history assimilation was an expectation placed on both Indigenous Australians and immigrants. For discussion of this see Haebich, A., *Spining the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2008. For the purpose of assimilation Indigenous Australians were also included in the events surrounding the Royal Tour. See for example Healy, C., *Forgetting Aborigines*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.

¹⁸ National Archives Australia: J25, 1961/9500; 1) Assimilation - 2) New Settlers League - 3) General Policy.

¹⁹ Murphy, J., *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000, p 8.

²⁰ Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, pp 72-73.

²¹ Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia' in *Population Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3, 1952. At the end of the War Murphy worked in the refugee camps of Europe initially with the United Nations Refugee Resettlement Association and then the International Refugees Organisation. He went on to conduct follow-up studies on refugee resettlement in Australia and elsewhere.

migrants', when the four guest speakers could not agree on what was involved or how assimilation should be achieved.²²

Subsequent studies considered the application and effects of the assimilation policy often on “collective” or ethnically defined groups of new arrivals.²³ By the 1960s, although Australia had officially moved its policy away from assimilation, scholars continued to explore its previous application, often in broader, more migrant inclusive ways, questioning the way in which ethnicity, background, the manner of migration, and the conditions in, and exposure to, the host society contributed to the migrant experience.²⁴ Today, some 60 years on, the policy of assimilation continues to be of interest for, as Anna Haebich notes, despite general support for multiculturalism in Australia, there is an apparent growing nostalgia for ‘a return to the cultural homogeneity promised by assimilation’: a rise in what she refers to as “retro-assimilationist” ideals and imaginings.²⁵

Markus and Taft, in a recent “reconceptualisation” of the policy of assimilation argue that a distinction must to be made between the rhetoric which was employed by the Australian authorities in selling the arrival of large numbers of non-English speaking migrants to the Australian public, and the actual application

²² National Archives Australia: SP369/3, VOLUME 8/2; Nation's Forum of the Air - 'What do we mean by assimilation of Migrants?' [Topical debate] [Box 7]. Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, introduced the topic and the four speakers who represented diverse sections of the wider community were Mr R.D. Huish – Queensland President of Returned Serviceman's League; Mr W.E.H. Stanner – Department of Anthropology and Sociology ANU; Mr A.E. Monk President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions; and Mr Geoffrey Thomas, English playwright and critic, migrant of three years.

²³ See for example Price, C.A., 'Immigration and Group Settlement' in Borrie, W.D. (ed.) *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, UNESCO, Paris, 1959, Borrie, W.D. & Packer, D.R.G., *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954, Borrie, W.D., 'New and Old Australians' in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.) *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953.

²⁴ See for example Martin, J.I., *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965. Price, C., 'Immigrants' in Davies, A.F. & Encel, S. (eds.) *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970.

²⁵ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, p 393.

of the policy of assimilation itself.²⁶ Certainly Jean Martin, had argued in the 1970s that the policy was ‘designed to keep Australians favourably disposed to large-scale immigration from countries traditionally regarded as foreign’.²⁷ Archival evidence supports this claim as the authorities aimed to “condition” the Australian public towards the acceptance of a radical shift in immigration policy.²⁸ As the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, stated in a letter to the High Commissioner’s Office London (19 September 1947) it is essential that

a consistent line... be taken in educating and preparing the Australian public to the acceptance of large scale migration and it is particularly important with such a measure as the displaced persons scheme that the consistent line ... should be continued so as to avoid any unfavourable reaction.²⁹

Undoubtedly the promise that new migrants would be assimilated into the Australian way of life was a key component of the Government’s efforts to garner the general public’s acceptance of large scale non-English speaking migration.

Similarly, the way in which the policy of assimilation was implemented is also open to debate. It is important to note that Calwell firmly believed that the assimilation of migrants was a job best done by the Australian people themselves, particularly through the churches and through voluntary organisations such as the YMCA, the YWCA, the Country Women’s Association, the Boy Scouts, and the

²⁶ Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015, p 234.

²⁷ Martin, J.I., *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978, p 208.

²⁸ See for example National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330; Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio.

²⁹ National Archives Australia: A6980, S250104; Displaced persons - Policy Part 1 [370 pages].

Girl Guides.³⁰ From 1949 these voluntary bodies and volunteers would be co-ordinated through the newly formed Good Neighbour Movement.³¹ This partially government-funded, but essentially volunteer organisation would act as an umbrella association to facilitate personal contact between migrants and Australians in order to assimilate new arrivals and to promote the value of immigration to the wider population.³² The role of these organisations in assimilation has contributed to Kristy Kogegei's argument that the process of assimilation of new arrivals, although officially orchestrated, occurred primarily "on the ground" at the grass roots level.³³ In a similar vein, Marcus and Taft argue that the lack of funding, with less than one-tenth of one per cent of the immigration budget assigned to assimilation activities, and the reliance on 'a voluntary system run by amateurs' meant that the Government's ability to enforce assimilation was in fact 'poorly conceived, ill-defined and without financial or human resources for meaningful implementation'.³⁴

³⁰ Calwell, A. in *Tomorrow's Australians*, Volume 11, 14 Feb 1949, p 1.

³¹ Note that the organisation was called the Good Neighbour Council in some states and the New Settlers League in others. The idea of the Good Neighbour movement was based on the New Settlers Leagues which had operated in the eastern states of Australia during the 1920s to help British immigrants to settle hence the continuing use of that title in some places.

³² By 1953 there were 95 Good Neighbour branches around Australia, with an estimated 10,000 members co-ordinating the work of over 100,000 volunteers from a significant and diverse range of voluntary organisations. National Archives Australia: D400, SA1956/8959; Assimilation General Monthly Reports. Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1951, p 23. As many scholars have noted, in the early years, the majority of the members of the Good Neighbour Council were middle-class Australians who exemplified white Anglo cultural norms. Consequently, they found it difficult to work with non-English speaking migrants of diverse ethnicities and studies have generally been critical of the work of the Good Neighbour Movement. See for example Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1966. Mc Master, D., *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Victoria, 2001. For more information on this organisation see for example Tavan, G., 'Good neighbours?: Community organisations, migrant assimilation and Australian society and culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997.

³³ Kogegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012.

³⁴ Markus & Taft, 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation', p 234 and 250.

In reality, given the lack of financial and other resources, the desire to engage in a two-way process of assimilation through the mixing of old and New Australians, resulted in the need for far more nuanced methods of assimilation and these included taking advantage of the cultural bridging opportunities offered by the national narratives associated with large scale ceremonial events.

Scholars remain divided on what large celebratory and commemorative events can tell us about a country and its people. Graeme Davison suggests that, while historians need to ‘approach these festivals with the eyes of an anthropologist, alert for hints of ambiguity, liminality, latent conflict’ they are conventionally ‘occasions for asserting group identity and unity’.³⁵ Agreeing with Davison, I further contend that while they are often celebrations of the past they are also windows into the society of the day and perhaps more importantly mirrors, reflecting an idealised and imagined society of the future.

The ceremonial events under discussion in this paper could be considered as exemplars of a national narrative, an integral part of the “imagined community”³⁶ that provided an opportunity for migrants to share in the experience; an experience which represented Australian culture and history and key elements of the Australian way of life they were expected to embrace. The ideas of a shared history and of shared experiences are considered among the essential elements in the establishment of national communities and national identities.³⁷ The presence of a nationalist discourse is, as Tony Bennett contends, particularly important in settler societies, and by extension immigrant nations such as Australia where it is

³⁵ Davison, G., ‘Welcoming the world: The 1956 Olympic games and the re- presentation of Melbourne’ in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, p 65.

³⁶ Anderson, B.R., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

³⁷ Spillman, L., *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.

‘obliged to override the conflicting prior loyalties and bonds of imaginary solidarity of different immigrant populations’.³⁸

Of particular importance to Australian authorities was the fact that these large celebrations provided an opportunity for new and old Australians to come together – to learn from and about each other. They also provided an opportunity to sell Australia’s mass migration program to the wider community through exhibitions of migrant culture and by demonstrating the migrant’s apparent willingness to be part of the Australian community. Therefore, these events fostered assimilation and reinforced the notion of the ideal of shared beliefs and values while simultaneously socialising individuals and reaffirming their commitment to the values of the society as a whole.³⁹ They were, as Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing argue,

effective promoters of national unity and loyalty...deliberately designed to reach and involve very large numbers across a broad geographical area...they provide a sense of belonging...a collective national memory.⁴⁰

This ideal of social cohesion was particularly important when set against the growing international tensions of the early 1950s and these events allowed the

³⁸ Bennett, T., 'Introduction: National Times' in Bennett, T., Buckridge, P., *et al.* (eds.) *Celebrating the Nation: A Critical Study of Australia's Bicentenary*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1992, p xvii.

³⁹ Etzioni, A., 'Toward a Theory of Public Ritual ' in *Sociological Theory*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2000, p 47.

⁴⁰ Frost, W. & Laing, J., *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict*, Routledge, London 2013, p 16.

Australian authorities to show that all Australians, new and old, were united behind the values and symbols of the nation and the empire.⁴¹

The Events of 1951 to 1954 and Their Impact on Assimilation

The 1951 Jubilee of Federation was, as Stephen Alomes argues, ‘a continuing circus’ of historical pageants, cavalcades, events and speeches⁴² with over 1400 public events and ceremonies planned in the state of Victoria alone.⁴³ In January of the Jubilee year, the delegates at the Annual Citizenship Convention discussed the excellent opportunity the Jubilee provided, not only to instruct new arrivals, but also to show the Australian people just how much migration was contributing to the nation.⁴⁴ The importance and potential of the Jubilee as a vehicle to encourage acceptance of the mass migration scheme is evidenced by the fact that the assimilation of New Australians was announced as one of the official themes of the Jubilee year.⁴⁵

The year following the Jubilee, 1952, was a particularly bad year for Australia’s immigration programme. An unexpected economic downturn created significant unemployment especially among New Australians. This resulted in prolonged

⁴¹ Morris, E., ‘Forty years on: Australia and the Queen, 1954’ in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 18, Number 40, 1994, p 2.

⁴² Alomes, S., *A Nation at Last: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde NSW, 1988, p 153.

⁴³ Mitchell, J., ‘Maypoles and Electric Fences: Centenary Celebrations in 1950s Victoria’ in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Volume June, 2010, p 81.

⁴⁴ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 35. The Australian Citizenship Conventions occurred annually (later biennially) between 1950 and 1968. The aim of these Conventions was to bring together representative from the Government and from a variety of voluntary organisations including the churches that were actively involved in the assimilation of new arrivals. Meetings discussed the problems experienced by migrants, made recommendations to facilitate and improve integration into Australian society and promote Australian citizenship.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, ‘Maypoles and Electric Fences: Centenary Celebrations in 1950s Victoria’, p 81.

⁴⁵ The six official themes were – the inculcation of true patriotism, balanced national development, proper assimilation of New Australians, decentralisation of industry and population, conservation of natural resources, and strengthened national defence backed by increased production. See for example *Wodonga and Towong Sentinel*, Wodonga, Victoria, 26 January 1951, ‘Jubilee themes made clear to children’, p 1.

stays in accommodation centres and significant ill feeling among migrants, including often violent disturbances at centres such as Bonegilla and Matraville.⁴⁶ It also fuelled the ongoing discussion among sections of the Australian community about the success of the immigration program as a whole, especially as fewer British migrants were arriving and the numbers of those already here returning home was increasing. This downturn of the greatly valued British migrant placed added pressure on the assimilation of European arrivals and contributed to an increased questioning of the process and success of assimilation.⁴⁷ The concern over the success, or perceived failure, of the assimilation policy was addressed at the 1952 Citizenship Convention. Consequently, the Coronation of the new Queen in 1953 came at an opportune time.⁴⁸

The 1953 Citizenship Convention was dedicated to the new Queen, an acknowledgment of her place in Australian society and in the assimilation of 'her majesty's newest subjects'.⁴⁹ The royal crown was used as a symbol at the event and a large portrait of the young Queen Elizabeth was on display for the duration of the proceedings. Resolutions passed at the 1953 convention, like those at the Jubilee Convention, aimed to secure the participation of migrants at celebratory events. There was to be a special emphasis placed upon migrants resident in

⁴⁶ See for example Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp 130-32.

⁴⁷ See for example *North-Eastern Advertiser*, Scottsdale, Tasmania, 20 November 1951, 'New Australian Display', p 6.

⁴⁸ At this time there was an increasing scholarly interest in immigration and assimilation. See for example *The Canberra Times*, ACT, 24 January 1953, 'Political Science School to Discuss Migration', p 4. Activities to aid assimilation were also under surveillance with Commonwealth Migration Officers in each state presenting quarterly reports to the Assimilation Division of the Department of Immigration on the assimilation activities conducted in their regions see for example National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/26; Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO.

⁴⁹ The press often reported on New Australians as Her Majesty's newest subjects during the period of the Coronation and the Royal Tour. See for example *Cairns Post*, Queensland, 17 April 1953, 'Queen's New Subjects to do Homage to Her Majesty', p 5.

accommodation centres, especially children. This emphasis on migrant children was also a dominant feature at the Convention itself with a group starting the proceedings by singing God Save the Queen in front of the symbolic portrait while others laid flowers, bowing and curtsying in a reported show of their respect.⁵⁰

After the experience of the Jubilee of Federation, the aim of the Coronation celebrations was similarly expressed as an opportunity for the mixing of new and old Australians, which would in turn further the education of migrants in the Australian way of life and set the expectations of citizenship. However, unlike the Jubilee where participation was only encouraged, this time participation was expected. A booklet of instruction was produced for members of clubs and churches to aid in their work with migrants,⁵¹ and in April 1953 a memorandum was sent to all migrant accommodation centres from the Department of Immigration with instructions for the celebration of the Queen's Coronation. The Memo requested that Centre Directors 'should bring together representatives of all Sections of the Centre, including attached staffs, to decide what functions are most appropriate to the occasion'.⁵² It went on to offer suitable suggestions which included: an international concert followed by supper for official guests; an arts and crafts exhibition; sports days for children; presenting all children with a small Union Jack or Australian flag; encouragement of New Australians and their children to take part in any mass demonstrations of loyalty in the area; and, provision of suitable decorations such as bunting or illumination of a section of

⁵⁰ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1953, pp 4-5.

⁵¹ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 29.

⁵² National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/10; Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.

the centre itself.⁵³ The Department of Immigration also recognised that the funding of activities for smaller hostels and centres would be difficult and showed their commitment to participation by offering a supplement to the amenities fund of up to £30 to help cover costs.⁵⁴

By the time of the 1954 Royal Tour, which Peter Spearritt describes as ‘the most popular and elaborate ritual this country has ever seen’⁵⁵, the Department of Immigration was well versed in the use of significant events as an assimilationist tool. Again, New Australians were expected to take part in the celebrations and local organisers were instructed to ensure that migrants had access to ‘strongpoints from which they may pay their loyal respects to Elizabeth II in whose Australian realm they have been given a new home and a chance of a new life of liberty and happiness’.⁵⁶ Evidence suggests that they did just that, joining with the estimated 75 per cent of the total population to catch a glimpse of the Queen and Prince Phillip as they traversed the country during their eight week visit. As an added emphasis, new and old Australians were regularly reminded that the Queen was the perfect young wife and mother. The fact that her children were of a similar age to those of many baby-boom Australian and migrant families helped in building the association, and the aspiration toward the happy nuclear family so essential to the Australian way of life.⁵⁷

So, it is apparent that across all of these events there is an evolving pattern of focus on the assimilation of migrants, of inculcating them into the idealised

⁵³ National Archives Australia; Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.

⁵⁴ National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/33; Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

⁵⁵ Spearritt, P., ‘Royal Progress: The Queen and Her Australian Subjects’ in Goldberg, S.L. & Smith, F.B. (eds.) *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p 138.

⁵⁶ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, February 1954, ‘Queens Visit will Assist Assimilation’, p 1.

⁵⁷ Alomes, *A Nation at Last: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, p 156.

Australian way of life and of increasing sophistication in the use of events as tools to support these assimilationist aims. When we look more closely at the events themselves and the involvement of the migrants from the accommodation centres, a number of common themes emerge including the importance of shared experience as a way of facilitating the two-way assimilation process and the heavy involvement of children as the expected key facilitators for on-going assimilation of migrant families.

The goal of mixing old and New Australians is particularly evident in the instructions to centre managers and to the organisers of local events who were encouraged to include the new arrivals who know ‘nothing of our traditions and ways of life’.⁵⁸ Decorated floats in the street parades and processions that marked the Jubilee and the Coronation proved a common way for Centres to participate very visibly at a local level, and there are many examples of this. Reading contemporary newspaper accounts, outside of the success of Enoggera and Wacol Holding Centre floats stealing the show in the Brisbane Jubilee procession and jointly winning the best float award⁵⁹, it is the colour and spectacle migrants bring to the celebrations which is most often reported. The *Benalla Standard* provides a typical example when it noted that the Benalla Immigration Centre float ‘was a delight with its lovely decorations...New Australians in their colourful national costumes surrounded by flags and flowers...completed by a large photograph of Her Majesty’.⁶⁰ This style of reporting, so typical of the times, is difficult to interpret. Certainly there is evidence of difference rather than unity but the very

⁵⁸ The Wollongong organising committee, for example, was very aware of the large numbers in the BHP and other accommodation centres in the district and the need to involve them in activities. *South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, Wollongong, 19 October 1950, ‘Federation Jubilee Celebrations’, p 1.

⁵⁹ *The New Australian*, Canberra, April 1951, ‘Prize Float’, p 1.

⁶⁰ *The Benalla Standard*, Benalla Victoria, 4 June 1953 ‘Coronation’, p 2 and 5.

fact that that the immigration Centre was represented is an indication of an evolving mutual acceptance and perhaps recognition by the centre residents of the central themes of queen and country. But how does one determine the underlying motivation, or differentiate between spontaneity and external pressures to participate, and how do we interpret events such as migrants decorating the whole Enoggera Centre in 1953 with paintings, crowns, royal insignia and bunting?⁶¹

Certainly in some centres and activities there is a greater evidence of a coming together of communities. At the Greta Centre for example migrant children marched in a Coronation procession in Sydney. However, celebrations continued back at the centre with a fireworks display and a barbeque attended by over 3,000 people including 1,200 Australian visitors from the surrounding area, a much greater number of non-migrant participants than previously seen in the camp.⁶² By the 1954 Royal Tour, there is also evidence of an increased confidence and belonging by migrants who are now among the key organisers at many events. For example, in Adelaide, a Royal Ball was held and half the attendees were New Australians. Furthermore, the supper arrangements ‘were the responsibility of a committee of ladies, representatives of all national groups’.⁶³ The attendees forwarded a message of loyalty to the queen who in response wrote to say that during her visit she had ‘the pleasure of learning and seeing something of the achievements of the newcomers to Australia’ and forwarded her best wishes to them and their future and that of their children.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 3 June 1953, 'Brilliant Pageantry Highlights the Coronation', p 18.

⁶² *The New Australian*, Canberra, July 1953, 'Old and New Unite to Acclaim Queen', p 1.

⁶³ National Archives Australia; Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO.

⁶⁴ National Archives Australia; Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO.

A key potential of these celebratory events was their ability to be used to educate about, and facilitate acceptance of, new arrivals (and more importantly the mass migration scheme itself) among the wider public. Alongside of the emphasis on the colour and spectacle discussed above, the long cultural traditions of these European arrivals were also showcased through concerts, often held at migrant centres, of European classical music, described as a counterbalance to ‘the preponderance of American light music’,⁶⁵ and through the *New Australian Arts and Crafts Exhibition* which toured nationally during the Jubilee Year. The emphasis on the migrants’ contribution through labour was particularly strong. Films which illustrated the idea of ‘migration at work’ in the migrant accommodation centres, the schools, and on the essential national infrastructure and construction works were produced and shown to audiences across the country.⁶⁶ This theme was also evident in Victoria where the Jubilee Train dedicated one of its ten carriages to “Our New Australians”, who were described as vital to the country’s security and development.⁶⁷

Of course these events also resulted in the conditioning of the Australian public through “migrant made good” stories including the awards given by the Royal visitors to migrant ex-servicemen, or the bravery medal for a young Tasmanian New Australian who saved a girl from drowning in the Derwent River.⁶⁸ Examples of successful assimilation into mainstream Australia were highlighted in stories such as that of the New Australian chefs who cooked for the Queen in

⁶⁵ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 35.

⁶⁶ Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 35.

⁶⁷ The Jubilee of Federation coincided with the centenary of Victoria’s separation from New South Wales and this special ten carriage train travelled throughout the state highlighting Victoria and Australia’s achievements.

⁶⁸ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, April 1954, 'Migrants Given Awards by the Queen and Governor', p 4.

Canberra⁶⁹ or the Hungarian migrant who made the wattle blossom and tea-tree flower brooch presented to the Queen during her visit.⁷⁰

An important tool in progressing assimilation and acceptance of migrants was the involvement of children in these events. From the very beginning of the immigration program the importance of educating migrant children in the Australian way of life was noted by the Immigration Planning Council who looked to migrant youth as, not only future Australian citizens, but also as a window into the world and therefore the assimilation of, their overseas born parents.⁷¹ Migrant children in accommodation centres were already accustomed to daily and weekly rituals of flag ceremonies, anthems and oaths in centre schools⁷² and centre directors and teachers cleverly incorporated further nationalistic displays in celebratory gatherings. In the spirit of the Australian way of life, the playing and singing of *Advance Australia Fair* or the national anthem, and the saluting of the Australian flag preceded and concluded specifically organised child orientated activities such as decorated bicycle competitions, or, as at the Wacol Centre, a march to the sports ground, where the children participated in various activities such as running, tug of war, and tricycle races.⁷³ In the centres, as in the wider community, children were given miniature Australian flags, and

⁶⁹ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, April 1954, 'These New Australians Cooked for the Queen', p 5.

⁷⁰ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, May 1954, 'Queen's Brooch Made by New Australian', p 2.

⁷¹ Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *Digest*, p 9.

⁷² Just as school children in the wider community began the week raising and saluting the flag, pledging their allegiance to King and Country and singing God Save the King so too did the children in Migrant Accommodation Centres. In a report on DP children at the Woodside Migration Centre a journalist from *The News* notes that these young children have, in just three weeks 'learnt to sing God Save the King and recite the school oath to "God, King, and Empire"' and as such they have 'already captured some of the British spirit and are well on the way to becoming good new Australians'. *The News*, Adelaide, 12 July 1949, 'D.P. Children "Soon Real Australians"', p 3.

⁷³ National Archives Australia: A442, 1951/14/5145; Assimilation Activities of Migrants of Wacol Centre [15 pages].

were often at the centre of floats in parades.⁷⁴ In 1954, children from centres such as Greta and Cowra were bussed, like their Australian counterparts, from their camp schools to local showgrounds to see, and in some case perform for, the Queen.⁷⁵

Certainly the excitement of these events and the activities that played to the fun of migrant children increased their awareness. Writing on the topic ‘What I did on Coronation Day’, 14 year old Latvian born migrant Astrida expressed her excitement of the events as they unfolded at the Cowra Centre from the ‘feverish and exciting preparation’ to the beautiful decorations, the concert, and the mix of languages, to the grand finale - a bonfire and spectacular fireworks display. While there is perhaps the hand of the centre teacher in the content of some of this essay, there is, nevertheless, an underlying sense of fun and enjoyment.⁷⁶ This is also evident in other essays written by migrant children, such 11 year old Juris writing of his struggle to stay awake because he did not want to miss the ceremony on the radio⁷⁷, or 11 year old Vera who, having witnessed a special matinee of films on the royal family, added her own personal poem reflecting a childlike casual and comfortable relationship with the Queen when she says ‘Coronation Day has come to an end. Lizzy, my dear friend’.⁷⁸ To further reinforce the message, prize winners were presented with books around the topic of the Coronation and Queen Elizabeth.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ National Archives Australia; Assimilation Activities of Migrants of Wacol Centre [15 pages].

⁷⁵ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, February 1954, ‘Migrants to Share in Royal Visit’, p 5.

⁷⁶ National Archives Australia; Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

⁷⁷ National Archives Australia; Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

⁷⁸ National Archives Australia; Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

⁷⁹ National Archives Australia; Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

Assessing the Impact

As previously noted, by the time of the Royal Visit in 1954, the Department's skill at using celebratory events was well practiced, and furthermore, migrant participation had apparently also increased accordingly. But how successful was this tactic as an assimilationist device? How can one possibly measure the success of a policy that history has condemned?

If we look to contemporary official reports, the British High Commissioner Sir Stephen Holmes concluded that the migrants

will have been immensely impressed and stirred by the evidence of what the Crown means to us in the British Commonwealth; from whatever country they come they will, I believe, now feel that Australia "has something" and something for them, which they did not realise before.⁸⁰

In a more direct reference to assimilation a report from the South Australian Commonwealth Migration Officer states that from the 'manner in which old and new Australians mingled ... it appeared that the function was an even greater success from an assimilation point of view'.⁸¹ Similarly, the official mouth piece of the Department of Immigration to the migrant population, *The Good Neighbour*, noted that 'No part of the Australian community enjoyed the Royal visit more than did the new Australians. They were part of every welcoming crowd that greeted Australia's Queen'⁸² and concluded that even though there was 'diversity in their lands of origin. There was diversity in their tongues as they

⁸⁰ Quoted in Lowe, D., '1954: The Queen and Australia in the World' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 19, Number 46, 1995, p 7.

⁸¹ National Archives Australia; Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO.

⁸² *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, May 1954, 'Immigrants had Share in Royal Visit Rejoicings', p 5.

awaited her coming. But there was none in their proud acclamation of Her Majesty as “Our Queen”.⁸³

This apparent pride was certainly reflected in a claimed subsequent increase in applications for citizenship which was the government’s ultimate measure of assimilation success.⁸⁴ However, alongside of the wider, often positive, reporting of migrant participation in events there was other reportage, perhaps indicating failure in the education of the wider population. The *Newcastle Sun*, for example, described their local procession as including ‘everything from elaborate floats, brass bands and New Australians to circus elephants and clowns’⁸⁵, while the *Adelaide Advertiser* described New Australians as ‘beautifully unselfconscious in the bizarre costumes of their old countries’.⁸⁶ The *North-Eastern Advertiser* even outlined the issues in Tasmania where a display of New Australian work was abandoned due to problems of language and other undisclosed disagreements which were ‘just too great to overcome’.⁸⁷ There were also examples of tokenism such as the invitation for four migrant women to join a luncheon at St Kilda Town Hall for women’s organisations during the Royal Tour⁸⁸, and perhaps even an element of elitism when the Good Neighbour Council of Victoria, the very organisation charged with aiding settlement and assimilation, arranged for a stand to hold 500 migrants to see the Queen’s cavalcade pass through Melbourne at the

⁸³ *The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, March 1954, 'Queen's Tribute to Australia', p 1.

⁸⁴ See for example *Cootamundra Herald*, Cootamundra NSW, 10 July 1953, 'New Australians and the Queen', p 2.

⁸⁵ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 30 January 1951, '500,000 Line Streets To Watch Jubilee Parade Through City', p 4.

⁸⁶ *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, SA, 17 July 1951, 'About People ', p 8.

⁸⁷ *North-Eastern Advertiser*, 'New Australian Display'.

⁸⁸ *The Good Neighbour*, 'Migrants to Share in Royal Visit'.

cost of 15 shillings a ticket which was beyond the means of many migrant families.⁸⁹

Just as an official measure of success is difficult, so too is an assessment of the migrant reaction, particularly, as Connors states, there is ‘very little on the public record to tell us what New Australians really thought’.⁹⁰ Perhaps these events did little to explain to the migrant population what Rivett describes as the “enigma wrapped in a mystery” which is Queen Elizabeth’s role and status in the British Commonwealth’.⁹¹ Certainly, as discussed earlier, migrants residing in accommodation centres participated, especially women and children, but one is left to ask; did they do so because they felt it was compulsory, because they believed in the cause that was being put forward or, did they do so for a sense of fun and relief from the conditions they were enduring?

Conclusion

The Jubilee of Federation celebrations of 1951, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and subsequent Royal Tour of Australia in 1954 provided important opportunities to progress the assimilation of new arrivals into the Australian way of life. In an environment where the Department of Immigration was already turning to community and volunteer organisations to engage with migrants to facilitate assimilation, these events provided unprecedented opportunities for the mixing of old and New Australians and the education of the wider public in an attempt to gain much needed acceptance of the mass migration scheme as a whole. Migrant involvement in local celebrations, at least in the eyes of the

⁸⁹ *The Good Neighbour*, 'Migrants to Share in Royal Visit'.

⁹⁰ Connors, J., *Royal Visits to Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2015, p 114.

⁹¹ Rivett, 'The Monarchy and the Migrant', p 68.

Department, had the potential to mitigate public prejudice and fears and provide an opportunity for Australians to embrace Her Majesty's newest subjects.⁹²

The key value of the exploration of the extent and nature of migrant participation in these national celebratory events lies in the insight it gives us into the importance ascribed to Australia's policy of assimilation and the lengths to which Australian authorities went to ensure its success. Even though cultural alignment (inculcation of the elusive Australian way of life into new arrivals) was important, gaining acceptance of the overall migration program was equally so, and this required acceptance of new arrivals by the Australian public.

If, as John Murphy argues, assimilation is 'a mirror in which Australians saw reflected what they thought of their national identity, and what they hoped was their imagined community'⁹³, then the migrant participation in these events certainly saw an increasing level of engagement between old and New Australians where, reflecting the aims of the Department of Immigration, the

[d]ifferences of religion, social status, political persuasion and way of life disappear[ed] in the atmosphere of loyalty to Her Majesty... [and] differences of racial origin and periods of residence in Australia ...[found] no place in the common claim for the Queen.⁹⁴

In reality, Australia's assimilation policy, as recent scholarship has suggested, was actually 'far more complex than our potted policy histories suggest'.⁹⁵ The

⁹² The press often reported on New Australians as Her Majesty's newest subjects during the period of the Coronation and the Royal Tour. See for example *Cairns Post*, 'Queen's New Subjects to do Homage to Her Majesty'.

⁹³ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, p 67.

⁹⁴ *The Good Neighbour*, 'Queens Visit will Assist Assimilation', p 1.

⁹⁵ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, p 9.

way in which migrants were exposed to these expectations was often more nuanced than learning the language or attending Good Neighbour morning teas or church socials and the two-way nature of assimilation, which in this period involved educating Australians to accept such a large number of new arrivals, has been rarely considered.

Bibliography

- Alomes, S., *A Nation at Last: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde NSW, 1988.
- Anderson, B.R., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.
- Barcs, E., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.), *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, pp 36-45.
- Bennett, T., 'Introduction: National Times', in Bennett, T., Buckridge, P., et al. (eds.), *Celebrating the Nation: A Critical Study of Australia's Bicentenary*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1992, pp xiii-xviii.
- Borrie, W.D., 'New and Old Australians', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 169-86.
- Borrie, W.D. & Packer, D.R.G., *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954.
- Caiger, G. (ed.), *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953.
- Cairns Post*, Queensland, 17 April 1953, 'Queen's New Subjects to do Homage to Her Majesty'.
- Calwell, A. in *Tomorrow's Australians*, Volume 11, 14 Feb 1949.
- Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Canberra, 1950.
- Connors, J., *Royal Visits to Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2015.
- Cootamundra Herald*, Cootamundra NSW, 10 July 1953, 'New Australians and the Queen'.

- Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.
- Davison, G., 'Welcoming the world: The 1956 Olympic games and the representation of Melbourne' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, pp 64-76.
- Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1951.
- Department of Immigration, *Digest*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra, 1953.
- Eggleston, F.W., 'The Australian Nation', in Caiger, G. (ed.), *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953, pp 1-22.
- Etzioni, A., 'Toward a Theory of Public Ritual ' in *Sociological Theory*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2000, pp 44-59.
- Frost, W. & Laing, J., *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict*, Routledge, London 2013.
- Haebich, A., *Spining the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2008.
- Healy, C., *Forgetting Aborigines*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.
- Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1966.
- Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012.
- London, J., *The Golden Age*, Vintage, Sydney, 2014.
- Lowe, D., '1954: The Queen and Australia in the World' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 19, Number 46, 1995, pp 1-10.
- Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015, pp 234-51.
- Martin, J.I., *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965.
- Martin, J.I., *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978.
- Mc Master, D., *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Victoria, 2001.

- McKenna, M., 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference', in Schreuder, D.M. & Ward, S. (eds.), *Australia's Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp 261-87.
- Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, pp 71-78.
- Mitchell, J., 'Maypoles and Electric Fences: Centenary Celebrations in 1950s Victoria' in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Volume June, 2010, pp 80-97.
- Morris, E., 'Forty years on: Australia and the Queen, 1954' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 18, Number 40, 1994, pp 1-13.
- Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia' in *Population Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3, 1952, pp 179-206.
- Murphy, J., *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000.
- National Archives Australia: **A436; 1948/5/330**, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio.
- National Archives Australia: **A442; 1951/14/5145**, Assimilation Activities of Migrants of Wacol Centre [15 pages].
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 112/1/10**, Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 112/1/26**, Assimilation Activities SA advise from CMO.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 112/1/33**, Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.
- National Archives Australia: **A445; 220/35/21**, Woodside centre - establishment of State school etc.
- National Archives Australia: **A6980; S250104**, Displaced persons - Policy Part 1 [370 pages].
- National Archives Australia: **D400; SA1956/8959**, Assimilation General Monthly Reports.
- National Archives Australia: **J25; 1961/9500**, 1) Assimilation - 2) New Settlers League - 3) General Policy.
- National Archives Australia: **SP369/3; VOLUME 8/2**, Nation's Forum of the Air - 'What do we mean by assimilation of Migrants?' [Topical debate] [Box 7].
- North-Eastern Advertiser*, Scottsdale, Tasmania, 20 November 1951, 'New Australian Display'.

- Price, C., 'Immigrants', in Davies, A.F. & Encel, S. (eds.), *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970, pp 180-99.
- Price, C.A., 'Immigration and Group Settlement', in Borrie, W.D. (ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, UNESCO, Paris, 1959, pp 267-88.
- Rivett, R., 'The Monarchy and the Migrant', in Dutton, G. (ed.), *Australia and the Monarchy: A Symposium*, Sun Books, Melbourne, Australia, 1966, pp 62-85.
- South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus*, Wollongong, 19 October 1950, 'Federation Jubilee Celebrations'.
- Spearritt, P., 'Royal Progress: The Queen and Her Australian Subjects', in Goldberg, S.L. & Smith, F.B. (eds.), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp 138-57.
- Spillman, L., *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.
- Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 3-14.
- Taft, R., *From Stranger to Citizen: A Survey of Studies of Immigrant Assimilation in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands Western Australia, 1965.
- Tavan, G., '“Good neighbours”: Community organisations, migrant assimilation and Australian society and culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, pp 77-89.
- The Advertiser*, Adelaide, SA, 17 July 1951, 'About People '.
- The Benalla Standard*, Benalla Victoria, 4 June 1953 'Coronation'.
- The Canberra Times*, ACT, 24 January 1953, 'Political Science School to Discuss Migration'.
- The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 3 June 1953, 'Brilliant Pageantry Highlights the Coronation'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, May 1954, 'Immigrants had Share in Royal Visit Rejoicings'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, April 1954, 'Migrants Given Awards by the Queen and Governor'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, February 1954, 'Migrants to Share in Royal Visit'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, May 1954, 'Queen's Brooch Made by New Australian'.

- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, March 1954, 'Queen's Tribute to Australia'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, February 1954, 'Queens Visit will Assist Assimilation'.
- The Good Neighbour*, Canberra, April 1954, 'These New Australians Cooked for the Queen'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, April 1951, 'Prize Float'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, February 1952, 'Death of the King'.
- The New Australian*, Canberra, July 1953, 'Old and New Unite to Acclaim Queen'.
- The News*, Adelaide, 12 July 1949, 'D.P. Children "Soon Real Australians"'.
The Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, 30 January 1951, '500,000 Line Streets To Watch Jubilee Parade Through City'.
- White, R., *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1981.
- Wodonga and Towong Sentinel*, Wodonga, Victoria, 26 January 1951, 'Jubilee themes made clear to children'.

Section 4 : Impact of Policy and Hostels

In the previous section, I considered the way in which the migrant accommodation centres provided a liminal space to facilitate the first stages of the rapid assimilation of new migrants into the Australian way of life. Having looked at the government intent, that is concentrating on the official aims of assimilation in both educating new arrivals and conditioning the Australian population, I now consider some negative impacts the application of the policy in the migrant accommodation centres had on one particular cohort of residents.

For male migrants, and breadwinners more generally, the policy of assimilation, in conjunction with the enforced work contracts, resulted in considerable hardship for many. Early years were often spent employed in hard manual labour, with a complete lack of recognition of previous qualifications. Furthermore, the isolation many suffered in remote work camps, and the worry and loss felt for the families from which they were separated, often resulted in long term social and mental health issues.³⁵⁵ However, for their dependants, the women and children left alone in Holding Centres and hostels, these periods of separation arguably took an equal or greater toll. Centres became places of long term confinement, where the expectations of assimilation, and the day to day running of the accommodation system itself, impacted on their everyday lives, and stripped them of their identities as wives and as mothers. For the so called “unsupported mothers”, widows and unmarried mothers, the situation was often magnified.

³⁵⁵ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person', p 54. For discussion on the work contract and the separation of families please see article in Appendix 2

This section focuses on the impact the application of the policy had within the centres, specifically on an often neglected cohort, women and children. Chapter 10 considers how one particular group of women refugees within the hostel system, widows and unmarried mothers, were labelled as assimilation failures. Chapter 11 outlines how the three cornerstones of post-war policy - assimilation, work contracts and hostel accommodation - contributed to child placement and adoption of refugee children. Finally, Chapter 12 examines how the role of the mother as carer and provider of food, both for nutrition and for the preservation of identity and culture, was taken away from migrant women and mothers through the particular food delivery practices adopted in the hostel system.

Chapter 10 Article 5: The 'unwanted' and 'non-compliants': 'Unsupported mothers' as 'failures' and agents in Australia's migrant holding centres

The following article, published in *The History of the Family*, discusses how the policy of assimilation and integration into the Australian community proved difficult for one particular cohort of immigrants, namely unsupported mothers, who were not easily able to conform to the requirements of the two year work contract and move from what was supposed to be temporary accommodation into the broader community. The article discusses the extent to which this cohort could be considered failures of the overall assimilation policy.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title of Paper | The 'unwanted' and 'non-compliants': 'unsupported mothers' as 'failures' and agents in Australia's migrant Holding Centres |
| Publication Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Published <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Accepted to History of the Family on 28/02/17 and is currently awaiting publication |

Principal Author

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | |
| Contribution to the Paper | Undertook original archival research on women and families in Australia's post world war 2 migrant accommodation system and produced the research notes for the conference paper that was the progenitor to this article. Produced the first draft of article together with Dr Kevin. The final article was jointly edited and completed. | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 60% | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | |
| Signature | Date | 9 - 5 - 17 |

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

- i. the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
- ii. permission is granted for the candidate to include the publication in the thesis; and
- iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|----------|
| Name of Co-Author | Catherine Kevin | |
| Contribution to the Paper | Wrote the 2500 conference paper based on Karen Agutter's primary research. Drafted the article together with Karen Agutter, bringing to it some feminist historiography. The final article was jointly edited and completed. | |
| Signature | Date | 10.5.17. |



The 'unwanted' and 'non-compliants': 'unsupported mothers' as 'failures' and agents in Australia's migrant Holding Centres*

Catherine Kevin^a and Karen Agutter^b

^aDiscipline of History, School of History and International Relations, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia; ^bFaculty of Arts, Department of History, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

Ideas of assimilated citizenship are inherently gendered and during Australia's post-World War Two migration boom they were deeply and explicitly invested marriage, children and domesticity. In this period of social conservatism and economic boom, assimilation rhetoric functioned as a reassuring mirror for the host population, promoting the dream of prosperous family life as the ultimate aspiration for refugees and migrants. The role of immigration Holding Centres within this vision was to provide a context in which migrants and refugees could take their first steps towards accomplishing this dream. These Centres of necessary temporary residence were designed as sites of transition towards autonomous, assimilated family life. However, those families headed by single mothers, often referred to in government records as 'unsupported mothers', had limited opportunities to live up to such images of assimilation, or even to comply with the economic imperatives of the migration scheme that had brought them to Australia. Based mainly on Department of Immigration records, this article demonstrates that despite recognising the long-term economic and social prospects their children represented, government agencies viewed many unsupported mothers as system failures. They attempted to remedy the situation by turning these women into live-in domestic workers, at times placing pressure on them to institutionalise their children in order to facilitate this, thereby prioritising their compliance with economic imperatives over support for their parenting. Within the limited scope of their agency, unsupported mothers responded by attempting to negotiate the terms of their compliance or simply refusing to comply. For the latter group, Holding Centres became a more permanent home. This permanence is read here as a gendered form of resistance to a system that struggled to foster their economic self-reliance without compromising their capacity to be mothers.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 February 2017
Accepted 28 February 2017

KEYWORDS

Refugees; single mothers; assimilation; gendered resistance; migrant Holding Centres

1. Introduction

In February 1949 the Australian Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, at the behest of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), agreed to allow 'unsupported mothers'

CONTACT Catherine Kevin  catherine.kevin@flinders.edu.au

*Single quotation marks are used throughout the article both for terms that were commonly used during the period (but which we do not necessarily endorse) and around direct quotations.

(widows/unmarried mothers) and their children to be included among the nation's intake of European displaced persons (DPs). These women, described by IRO Child Welfare Officer, Dorothy Marshall, as 'one of the greatest problems of the Hard Core';¹ were considered among the most difficult of the European refugees to resettle.² Although Marshall labelled the Australian government's decision to accept this group as 'one of the most humanitarian yet considered'³ in reality these mothers and their children were expected to rapidly assimilate and become self-supporting under the same two-year work contract obligation as other DPs. On arrival in Australia these women and their children were placed in the government funded migrant accommodation centres which were swiftly being established across the country. Despite Calwell's willingness to accept them, it soon became apparent that the expectations placed upon these women were totally unrealistic and consequently, in the eyes of the Australian authorities, their label as 'hard core problems' endured.

This article examines the experiences of unsupported mothers⁴ in government funded migrant accommodation centres in the context of assimilationist discourses that reflected government policy of the time and were central to their management within these centres. In doing this we also add to the recent narrative interrogating the place of assimilation in our understanding of the migrant experience, and explore in more detail the ways in which assimilation aims influenced the management of refugees in this period. We are attentive to its gendered inflections, thereby seeking to enrich scholarship that has analysed this period of migration to Australia through this lens. The case of unsupported mothers illustrates that the assimilation agenda was framed by economic and planning imperatives, which usually took precedence over social concerns. This article brings to light the forms of agency and resistance in which unsupported mothers engaged by examining the interplay between these women and the authorities in the accommodation centres. It therefore contributes to scholarship on gendered and migrant protest.

We make two central arguments. First, that Australia's assimilation goals had gendered effects on the newly arrived: effects that, in conjunction with a mandatory two-year work requirement, were particularly marginalising for unsupported mothers and their children. Second, that in the face of this marginalisation, unsupported mothers exercised resistance against Australia's migration policies which sought to prioritise their wage-earning over their parenting.

This article also builds on existing historical literature that addresses the role of accommodation centres in Australia's migration scheme, adding to this an account of the particular experiences of unsupported mothers brought to Australia as DPs. Probably the earliest consideration of the reception of DPs was that of Henry Murphy who, as part of a larger global study for the International Refugee Organization, commented that accommodation centres in Australia are:

theoretically temporary, and hence neither their administration nor their equipment are as satisfactory as they might be. They are very like D.P. camps in Europe, being in my experience better than the worst there and worse than the best. (H.B.M. Murphy, 1952, p. 185)

However, it was not until later general works on Australian immigration history that the accommodation centres were placed, albeit often briefly, within the context of the much wider mass migration scheme. James Jupp's 1966 work *Arrivals and Departures* set the scene of isolated centres which revolved around communal ablutions blocks and institutional food, until the 1980s when Glenda Sluga's seminal work *Bonegilla: 'A Place of No Hope'* (Sluga, 1988) was published. While Sluga placed Bonegilla, the largest and longest running of the Reception

Centres, directly in the spotlight, it is only recently that more specific works on other centres (see for example Morris, 2001; Sestokas, 2010), have challenged her claim that '[a]ll the centres blur together ... as part of the collective memory of the post-War period' (p. 134).

Early works on Australian immigration history and Australia in the post-World War Two period have highlighted the role the government's policy of assimilation played in the settlement of new arrivals (on DPs specifically see Milanov, 1951 and more generally Bosworth & Wilton, 1981). The requirement for all new arrivals to blend quickly into the so-called 'Australian way of life'⁵ has been readily accepted (see for example Haebich, 2008; J. Murphy, 2000) and is not disputed within this paper. However, the government's ability to enforce assimilation has recently been questioned by Markus and Taft (2015), who argue that the policy was in fact 'poorly conceived, ill-defined and without financial or human resources for meaningful implementation' (p. 234). In line with Kokegei (2012) this paper argues that the application of the policy was far more nuanced than has previously been accepted and, in fact, migrant accommodation centres provided an opportunistic environment to advance the assimilation agenda. However, for unsupported mothers the expectation of assimilation was virtually impossible to fulfil and their inability to readily assimilate saw them cast as 'failures' and 'difficult' migrants.

Following Egon Kunz's ground-breaking *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians* (Kunz, 1988), there has been a welcome shift to examine the place of the DPs themselves within the wider context of Australia's mass migration scheme and the accommodation centres. In particular discussion of memory and commemoration (see for example Dellios, 2015), the consequences of the work contract (Agutter, 2013; Dellios, 2016), and the wider history of Australia's acceptance of refugees (Neumann, 2015) have highlighted the important and specific ways in which government policy impacted on DPs in Australia.

Although historically women migrate at a similar rate to men, they have often been excluded from immigration history, cast as dependants rather than autonomous actors (DeLaet, 1999, p. 3). In the Australian context this exclusion has begun to be redressed with studies on the encouraged migration of single women to address the problem of migrant gender imbalance (Kunek, 1993; Simic, 2014) and, more recently, Dellios' (unpublished) account of oral histories with adult daughters of the women who lived in the Benalla Centre and Pennay's (2015) ongoing consideration of the Benalla residents. As well as drawing on these studies of gender and migration, histories of twentieth-century Australian motherhood, particularly single motherhood and coercive adoption (for example Haebich, 2000; Swain and Howe, 1995), inform this research.

The historiography on immigrant protest in Australia during this period has highlighted the activism of those privileged by their sex (for example, Bosworth, 1987; Pennay, 2011, p. 125) or, in the case of Hassam's (2009) work on women, by being British and therefore English-speaking and in possession of a cultural capital unavailable to non-British migrants. Identifying forms of resistance among more marginalised groups requires different approaches to the evidence. This article examines descriptions of unsupported DP mothers in the archive for evidence of their resistant agency. This agency presents itself in the women's explicit and implicit refusals to comply with the demands of the Department of Immigration or to respond in prescribed ways to the covert pressures placed on them. We therefore seek to enrich existing histories of migrant protest currently available in the historical literature by offering this account of the traces of resistance exercised by unsupported refugee mothers.

This article is based on extensive archival research detailing the management and operation of the migrant temporary accommodation centres as well as data on government policy towards immigration at the time. For our purposes, the richness of this archive lies not just in the documentation of changing policies but in the reports of Department of Immigration employees who provided observations of unsupported mothers and their children. Our analysis of the gendered migrant protest draws particularly on reports from the social workers who worked with unsupported mothers. It is important to note that these, predominantly female, social workers were in fact employed by the Department's Social Welfare Section as it was called, formed as a branch of the Aliens Assimilation Division in 1949,⁶ and their primary role was to help new arrivals 'become happily absorbed into the community'.⁷ Their reports can be read both for the expectations, curiosities, frustrations and sympathies of Department social workers and for evidence of unsupported mothers' agency. Unpacking the encounters between the Department employees and the women is central to our method. In addition to this archive we refer to Sophia Turkiewicz's (2013) autobiographical documentary film *Once My Mother*. This account of Helen Turkiewicz, the young single mother of baby Sophia arriving in Australia from a refugee camp, is a rare detailed rendering of the complex and compromised transition from a government-managed arrival to a more established and somewhat independent family life. We venture that Turkiewicz's film illuminates a larger history of the experiences of single mothers and their children displaced by war and migration.

To provide context to the main arguments of this paper we begin with a background describing Australia's uptake of post-World War Two refugees and explain the system of migrant accommodation centres that grew up to manage their inflow before addressing the key issues of the treatment and experiences of unsupported mothers.

2. Background: Refugees in Australia's post-war migration programme

In July 1947 Australia signed an agreement with the International Refugee Organization to settle European refugees/displaced persons.⁸ Over the six years that followed, more than 170,000 DPs made their homes in Australia and were joined by thousands of other British and European migrants as Australia looked to actively grow both its population and its economy.⁹ These post-war migrants and refugees marked an enormous shift in Australian immigration policy, and as a result the nation moved from a largely homogenous population based on strong links with Britain towards the nascent underpinnings of what would eventually become a multicultural society. In 1947 however, the arrival of thousands of non-English-speaking refugees was a challenge to a nation committed to the restrictive immigration policy enshrined in the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901). To convince the general population to accept these refugees would require very careful management: a conditioning campaign which widely publicised the prudent selection of fit, healthy, young men and women who would fulfil labour needs, be educated towards future citizenship, and who would, therefore, help to build a strong future nation.¹⁰

Key to Australia's reception of these DPs was the government's imposition of a work contract whereby all single refugees and heads of families would be required to accept allocated work for a period of two years. This work contract effectively resulted in a system of indentured labour whereby almost no consideration was given to previous experience or training and significant pressure (the threat of deportation) was placed on workers to

take up the employment allocated to them by the Department of Immigration and the Department of Labour and National Service. Generally men became labourers, often in remote locations on infrastructure and rebuilding projects, and women were sent to fill live-in domestic service positions in private homes or institutions. Given this emphasis on labour, Department of Immigration officials sought young, healthy workers, giving priority to single people and childless couples (H.B.M. Murphy, 1952, p. 180). However as the number of available suitable childless DPs fell, selection policy was quickly extended to include family groups. The Australian government recognised that to fulfil the country's post-war aspirations 'New Australians' who were both 'good and willing workers' and 'prospective breeders' were needed.¹¹ From February 1949, families headed by single mothers who were widows or did not have a spousal relationship were also included in the immigration intake.¹² These women are often referred to in government archives as an undifferentiated group of 'unsupported mothers'.

As Eubel (2010, p. 745) notes, the war had resulted in a dramatic shift in the demographic situation in Europe so that women outnumbered men, with seven million more in occupied Germany alone. Furthermore, over one million of these women were widows, or had husbands whose status was 'missing' (Eubel, 2010, p. 745). This incidence of widows, including widowed mothers, is also apparent amongst the DP population and in her article 'Lost Children: Displacement, Family, and Nation in Postwar Europe'; Tara Zahra (2009, p. 65) paints a distressing picture of the displaced women in Europe who lived in 'lamentable hygienic conditions ... in wartime ghettos, camps, and labor [*sic*] barracks' which further compounded the dehumanising and defeminizing effects of war.

The motives behind the decision to allow unsupported mothers from this cohort to participate in the Australian DP immigration scheme continue to be debated,¹³ but it is clear that strict controls were imposed on the selection of candidates. According to a 1949 IRO report, unmarried mothers with children were only accepted for resettlement in Australia:

Providing the babies are of European ethnic origin ... [and] The preselection of mothers [is] ... made with the greatest care, since it is of the utmost importance that the best possible type of women may have this opportunity ...¹⁴

Although the children of these women were, presumably, future workers and breeders, the women themselves were situated awkwardly in relation to both categories of desired New Australian adults. Their parenting responsibilities meant they were less than ideal workers, their status as 'prospective breeders' was deeply compromised within dominant gendered moral discourses by their single status, and their families fell outside the model of father as breadwinner and mother as carer, which was prevalent in Australian society in the 1940s and 1950s and at the heart of images of assimilation.

One such woman, KD,¹⁵ a Russian-speaking Polish mother of three had been a housewife in her home country where she lived with her husband and their two children during the early years of the war until the family was forcibly resettled in Germany as factory workers. In 1948, KD's husband had been missing for some time when her third child was born to a Polish DP in a camp where she was working as a cook. Her married status meant that even if she had wished to marry the father of this third child (which she didn't), she could not. He subsequently emigrated to England when the baby was two months old. Australian selection officers in Europe describe KD's blue eyes and brown hair and her children as 'clean and well cared for' and, after careful consideration, she and her children were accepted as suitable refugees for Australia.¹⁶ Despite Harold Holt's¹⁷ later declaration that the acceptance of

unsupported women like KD had prevented them from becoming 'a hard core of unwanted' in whatever country of Europe they managed to drift to'¹⁸ many of these women, as outlined below, would in fact become unwanted in their new homeland of Australia, accumulating debt in Holding Centres which became permanent homes rather than sites of transition.

3. Holding Centres: families and unsupported mothers

On arrival in Australia DPs were initially placed in government provided accommodation centres. Predominantly re-purposed ex-army and air force bases populated by Nissen huts, these centres were found across the country, more often than not in rural and regional towns. The first to be established were the Reception and Training Centres. The aim of these centres was threefold: to provide short-term accommodation for new arrivals, to begin the process of assimilation through lessons in English language and Australian culture (particularly expectations in relation to acceptance of an Australian diet, work practices and child raising) and to make the workplace allocations of male breadwinners and single women as required under their work contracts.

Workplace allocations often resulted in the separation of families with men sent to work away from their dependent wives and children. Consequently, alongside the Reception and Training Centres, a number of Holding Centres were established. Holding Centres were designed to provide short-term accommodation to allow time for breadwinners to begin earning and find suitable accommodation for their families within the wider society. By 1950 there were 19 such centres distributed across Australia, with many located around the inland towns of Victoria and New South Wales. Together they had the capacity to accommodate 20,000 women and children (Heyes, 1951, p. 20).¹⁹ Like the earlier Reception and Training Centres, Holding Centres were usually established in ex-army or air force bases and worked on the principle of communal living with cafeteria style food and shared ablutions. Official policy was to make accommodation centres not 'so comfortable that their occupants would not want to move out of them into their own homes' and rent was charged at all centres within a week of arrival.²⁰

A severe materials and housing shortage and the payment of minimum wages for unskilled work meant that there was limited capacity for men to pay their families' way out of the accommodation system, and secure private housing. Therefore, despite Immigration Department policy, which stressed the importance of maintaining a good rate of turnover in order to ensure ongoing availability of places of temporary residence for newly arrived DPs and subsequent assisted migrants,²¹ the steady inflow of refugees and migrants meant that Holding Centres were soon at maximum capacity. It is within this environment that unsupported mothers became the focus of the Department of Immigration's attention.

4. Becoming an 'unwanted' within the Holding Centres

On arrival in Australia widows with children and unmarried mothers entered the system as 'normal' DPs with the same expectations of transition through centres to fulfil their two-year work contracts. However, it became increasingly difficult to find workplaces for women with children, especially those with more than one dependent child. If the child(ren) were young, pre-school age in particular, there was the question of who could care for the child during working hours at a time when childcare facilities within the wider society were virtually

non-existent.²² Furthermore, Australian households, businesses and institutions in which the authorities sought to place these 'unconventional families' were either unwilling to employ a mother with children or unable to house them.

It is important to note that as well as those who arrived as unsupported mothers there was a cohort who attained this status post-arrival. Department of Immigration social work²³ reports indicate that for some women, a marriage of convenience was seen as a route to emigration and they separated from their husbands a short time after arriving in Australia. A 1949–1950 report states that 'Many German wives say quite frankly that they married only to get Displaced Person's status, and that they will not continue to live with their husbands.'²⁴ While this can be read as opportunism on the part of the women being described, it also illustrates the levels of disconnection and desperation that afflicted single women living in the conditions described above in post-war Europe. The records do not offer explicit details of the psychological and physical demands that may have been made on women either prior to or within these temporary marriages. One report refers to a German mother of two who married a Lithuanian DP two months before his departure for Australia. Soon after arrival he began a relationship with an Australian woman who became pregnant, and he declared his intention to remarry. Consequently, the German mother placed her children in the care of a farming family and took a live-in domestic position in a hotel.²⁵

Furthermore, in spite of hopes and expectations, many ostensibly more conventional marriages did not survive the system in which Holding Centres played a crucial role. Periods of enforced separation, added to the other vagaries of war and migration, caused relationships to buckle under the strain. Social worker reports recognised that post-war conditions in general, and prolonged separation due to work obligations in the early stages of migration to Australia in particular, were precipitating factors in the breakdown of marriages. The Department of Immigration's 1953 annual social work report for New South Wales stated that:

Marriages established on a good foundation are often broken under such conditions and we must face the fact that we are dealing with marriages contracted under abnormal conditions and that the unstable family life resulting will have repercussions in social behaviour in the future.²⁶

Indeed marital conflict was one of the main reasons for social workers attending the Holding Centres. Bearing in mind the wider social context of a certain tolerance of gendered violence in Australia in this period (Featherstone & Kaladelfos, 2016), reports include passing references to the physical and verbal abuse of women. They relate accounts of violence inflicted on women when couples were reunited, some of the conflict arising from financial strain, particularly if husbands sought to make wives responsible for payment of Holding Centre rents while they themselves made precarious attempts at breadwinning.²⁷ It was reported that 'continual separation makes reconciliation almost impossible' and many social workers believed that the presence of single men working in the Holding Centres among the women and children was a further threat to the survival of marriages.²⁸

Whatever the reason for their status as unsupported mothers, these women had in common the challenge of planning for a life beyond the Holding Centre in the absence of a male breadwinner, or at least the pressure from Centre management to do so. Correspondence in the Holding Centre files indicates that unsupported mothers were of great concern and social workers were urged to assess and deal with the situation: 'Unless some appropriate action is taken, the majority of the widows and the younger children will be a charge on this Department [Immigration] for many years to come.'²⁹ Indeed, by as early as November 1950

the Secretary of the Department of Immigration T.H.E. Heyes stated that 'Widows with children are amongst our greatest employment problems' and on behalf of the Department he suggested that 'all future sailings should not accept widows with more than one child unless the children are of working age.'³⁰

At an individual level unsupported women were generally discussed in economic and gendered moral terms. Descriptions of their lack of physical, intellectual and social discipline placed in doubt their capacity to contribute to Australian society as either workers or mothers. Regular social work reports noted the so-called 'problem cases' within the Holding Centres. General overviews listed the number of widows and dependent children in each Centre highlighting those with more than one child. The reports also indicate that a breakdown of nationality and religion was also supplied to allow authorities to target specific religious organisations for help.³¹ Long lists of monies owing for rent illustrate the perceived financial burden on the state. By the end of 1950 for example, one widow at the Woodside Centre in South Australia, with five children under 16 years, owed £230.³² By 1956 some of these debts increased beyond comprehension as an unmarried mother with three children at the Benalla Centre and a deserted wife with four children at the Greta Centre owed £377/3/0 and £615/19/6 respectively.³³ Social worker reports, while sometimes understanding of the difficulties these women faced, were often derogatory, labelling them trouble-makers and bad influences, and describing them as 'of low intelligence and poor physique'.³⁴ The reports also give us an indication of the longevity of these women's displacement and suffering. For example, a 1956 report noted the presence of a woman and her three children who had arrived in 1949 and still remained in the Wacol Centre in Queensland some seven years later.³⁵

For those unsupported mothers who had rent debts to pay and limited work options that allowed them to continue caring for their children, opportunities to conform to images of assimilated family life, or to comply with the economic imperatives of the scheme that had brought them to Australia, were extremely limited. Consequently, from the perspective of government agencies, these women threatened to become economic and social burdens and were perceived as a problem that needed fixing. The solution was to set the choice to leave the Holding Centres to pursue work, often without some or all of their children, against the risk of inhabiting the problematic subject position of unassimilable dependant.

5. Managing the burden

Key to managing the situation of unsupported mothers and addressing the perceived financial and social burden was the facilitation of a life independent of the Holding Centre. In a society where marriage was the expectation of the vast majority of women (Australian Liaison Committee of Women's National Organisations, 1951), senior social worker Hazel Dobson noted that:

marriage is the only really satisfactory solution in many cases of widows with several young children, [therefore] Social Workers, Church Workers and Good Neighbour Councils are urged to keep in mind the need for these women to be given opportunities to meet suitable men.³⁶

Certainly religious organisations and social workers tried to create opportunities for unsupported mothers to find husbands. One social worker noted that husbands who visited their wives within the Holding Centres were particularly useful in 'introducing widows to their unmarried friends and many marriages have resulted'.³⁷ Similarly, it was announced with

great excitement that, between February 1950 and October 1951, 16 widows, nine unmarried mothers and the daughter of a widowed resident were wed at the Benalla Centre where the welfare officer assisted 'with frocking, flowers and wedding breakfast arrangements, and has been called upon to act as bridesmaid nine times.'³⁸ These marriages also, ostensibly, improved the material prospects of 39 children and '[t]hree more marriages, all involving unmarried mothers with one child, have been arranged.'³⁹

While marriage was one option, even in a migrant community where men outnumbered women this was not a viable solution for all. The real solution, according to Australian authorities, lay in getting these women into the workforce so that they could fulfil their work contract obligations, move towards independence and relieve the state of its burden to support them. Otherwise, as the Southern Migration Officer suggested 'their continued idleness [might] ruin what slight incentive may remain to accept some responsibility for their own and their children's welfare.'⁴⁰ Comments such as these recall the sentiments of UN social workers in the refugee camps of Europe who questioned the maternal capabilities of DP women exposed to war and deprived of their privacy and hygiene (Zahra, 2009, pp. 64–65). In response, managers and social workers were given an emphatic remit: to turn resident mothers into wage-earners. The dual purpose of turning women's energies to paid work was to enable them to pay their rent debts to the Holding Centres and to find work that would free up the residential places they occupied with their children by providing alternative accommodation.

Various options and suggestions were discussed including employing some women within the centres, which was put into practice. Another suggestion was to encourage women to engage in suitably feminine work 'such as dressmaking, knitting and other handicrafts' with the articles being sold as income, or to promote day work at farms close to Holding Centres.⁴¹ The number of unsupported mothers in the centres is difficult to exactly determine. Regular counts give snapshots on certain dates, indicating the number of mothers and how many children were in their care, so that for example on 31 March 1950 in Holding Centres across the country there was a total of 773 unsupported mothers with 1077 children. Of these mothers 548 had one child, 162 had two children, 51 had three children, 9 had four, 2 had five and 1 woman had six children. None had work or accommodation prospects in sight.⁴² Dobson's reports also indicate the numbers of women and children involved were large. She claims there were regularly over 700 unsupported mothers living in centres and many of these were, to use her words, unemployable because of their 'lack of English and lack of training, general apathy, and the handicap of children.'⁴³ Therefore, and given the urgency of creating space for new arrivals in the Holding Centres, the positions deemed most appropriate were as live-in domestic servants either in homes, often located in the country, or in hotels and guest houses.⁴⁴ Indeed those charged with finding work for women were not obliged to assess their skills beyond their English language proficiency and their capacity to cook and clean. The Department's preference for placing them in domestic service was clear (Jordens, 1993, p. 48).

In July the Minister for Immigration appealed to the Australian public to accept widows and children via a press release issued in metropolitan and country newspapers titled 'Homes Wanted for Widows and Children.'⁴⁵ The *Goulburn Evening Press* (and many other newspapers) reported that:

The majority of the widows have one child only and there must be many homes, particularly in rural areas, where domestic help is needed and mother and child can be accommodated. ...

we are now appealing to open hearted people willing to give employment to these women, and, at the same time, accommodate them and their children. I feel sure we shall not have far to look and that the people of Australia will readily accept the Christian and moral obligation of assisting these innocent victims of the war to find security and happiness in Australia.⁴⁶

In the same month, *The Catholic Weekly* reported that:

Most of these women have pathetic stories. After the war, during which they lost their husbands, they drifted from camp to camp and country to country in Europe. ... Already Australia has made a humanitarian and Christian contribution to the problem in accepting some of these widows and children as immigrants. However, because of their children it was not possible for the women to take normal employment and arrangements were made for them to work in the centres as kitchen maids etc. in order that they might be near their children. However, to assist in their complete rehabilitation the department desires to find them other accommodation.⁴⁷

Following the Minister's appeal, the numbers in centres declined to 549 widows and 916 children. The very strong preference among employers for widows who spoke English and had only one child, who was old enough to attend school, meant that there were many unsupported mothers who could not fit the criteria.⁴⁸ An undated telegram from one Department of Labour employment officer to another⁴⁹ states that he is holding 43 vacancies for widows with one child but there were 'no people to fill these vacancies [as] all the widows left have *more* than one child'.⁵⁰ Even after this appeal by the Minister, the problem of unsupported mothers with more than one child clearly remained.

While, from the outset of the migration programme, schooling was made available to children either within the centres themselves or in nearby schools, provision for the education of pre-school-age children was a little slower to emerge and was limited to those aged between three and five years through the establishment of centre kindergartens (Agutter, 2016a). It is important to note that although many archival documents refer to the establishment of crèches these facilities were not childminding centres as we know them today. Rather crèche facilities were established to provide emergency live-in care for children in Holding Centres whose mothers were taken ill or hospitalised and who had no other family members to care for them.⁵¹ Indeed, in these circumstances they were indispensable and their closure could leave women with very few options, as was demonstrated by a 1952–1953 report that included reference to children being placed in state care by women who were 'badly affected by the closing of the [Cowra] Centre Crèche'.⁵² The absence of official childcare at Holding Centres meant that women who had opportunities for employment nearby had to improvise childcare arrangements, leaving older children in charge, paying fellow residents or exchanging favours.⁵³ The only alternative was the placement of children in institutions, either temporarily or permanently.

This alternative was sought in the context of widespread adoption in mid-twentieth century Australia. In 2008 and 2013, the Australian government offered two national apologies to the Stolen Generations and then to others who had been subject to forced adoption. Victims of these practices were removed, or had their children removed, on the grounds of race, in the case of Aboriginal children known as the Stolen Generations (Haebich, 2000), the single status of birth mothers (Swain, 1995; Swain et al. 2013) and other marginalising factors. The research findings that prompted these apologies reveal widespread practices of institutionalisation of single pregnant women, removal of babies at birth and coerced relinquishment of older children (Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997; Kenny, Higgins, Soloff, & Sweid, 2012). They also reveal the central role of government agents, social workers, medical professionals, priests and ministers of religion. In 1948 newspapers

reported on the establishment of a centre for the adoption of children under seven years of age, brought to Australia from the displaced persons camps in the Western Zone of Germany (The Advertiser, 1948, p.3). In this context, the idea of placing the children of single DP mothers, either temporarily or permanently, was hardly novel.

Social worker and other reports from all states indicate the significant number of children who were placed in government or charitable organisations across Australia as unsupported mothers either sought employment or were 'encouraged' to do so to meet the requirement of their work contracts. In May 1950 the Director of Northam Centre in Western Australia declared that 'the industrial absorptive capacity of these women remains nil' and therefore a system of child placement must be promoted. In reply (19 June 1950) the Commonwealth Migration Officer for Western Australia declared that 'any scheme to absorb migrant children by approved Institutions will receive the favourable consideration of this department'.⁵⁴ However, the pressures on the religious and charitable organisations were great and many said they could not accommodate migrant children. Consequently in Western Australia, converted army huts were provided to increase the places available at some institutions.⁵⁵ In the state of Victoria, 49 migrant children were placed under the Infant Life Protection provisions of the Children's Welfare Act between April and October 1951 and monthly reports from social workers in other states⁵⁶ show a steady stream of children being placed in a variety of care institutions, including Salvation Army homes, foundling hospitals, and religious institutions where their mothers were often required to pay maintenance contributions of between 20/- and 40/- per week.⁵⁷

Temporarily placing the child in government approved care under the Infant Life Protection Scheme,⁵⁸ or in less formal arrangements, was a compromise between the challenges single mothers posed to the authorities responsible for arranging their employment, and women's desire to keep their children. Writing of unmarried mothers of newborns, one report stated that if

she decides to keep the child she is referred to the Children's Welfare Department to place the child under the Infant Life Protection Scheme ... This gives the girl some responsibility and will not create a dependent helpless spirit so often found in these unmarried mothers in our Victorian Holding Centres and will certainly free the Department of the responsibility of maintenance for longer periods.⁵⁹

Permanent adoption was less prevalent than temporary placements (Agutter, 2016b) although Sherry Morris (2001, p. 94) states that single women who gave birth at the Uranquinty Holding Centre in New South Wales were encouraged to have their babies adopted and archival documents indicate that this practice may well have occurred in other centres as well.⁶⁰

A June 1951 report assessing the situation of widows at Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre stated that there were 40 widows and 65 dependent children. As these widows were under the same two-year work contract that applied to men, the Commonwealth Employment Service was responsible for them but found they could be impossible to place. The report goes on to say that in some cases all of a woman's children had been institutionalised leaving the mother free to seek employment. However the mother continued to be financially responsible for them, a charge that is described in the report as 'a steady drain on her income'. This cost presumably further affected her capacity to retrieve the children and establish a private home. In other cases, one child – usually the elder – was placed while the younger remained with the mother who sought employment that would accept them both. The

report concedes the negative effect this would have on the family, especially the child who was institutionalised, and notes that for those families where more than one child was placed in care, the anguish was often exacerbated by large age gaps between the children that meant they were accommodated separately from each other.⁶¹

This placement narrative was the impetus for Sophia Turkiewicz's (2013) film *Once My Mother*. This film works through the sense of betrayal Turkiewicz had felt since her Polish refugee mother, Helen, placed her in an Adelaide orphanage for two years when she was seven years old. It tells a story of her mother's survival in the face of almost unthinkable adversity. Before arriving in Australia as a single mother of a very young child, Helen Turkiewicz had travelled alone and at times on foot, from Poland to a Siberian gulag, then to Uzbekistan, to Persia, to Lusaka in Africa and finally to Australia. In the film Helen says 'I don't want another country; that's my first and the last'. Ultimately she accepted that establishing her financial independence here required painful decisions: 'I couldn't find a job when Sophia was small. They didn't like it in hotel or somewhere if you bring children.' Like many other women, Helen was forced to temporarily relinquish Sophia, an experience that left its mark on both mother and child (Turkiewicz, 2013).

Despite the options already listed, ongoing social work and other reports indicate that the problem of unsupported mothers remained significant. Although many women were scattered across Australia in different centres another solution evolved – the Benalla Holding Centre. This Centre, in the central Victorian town of the same name, had the advantage of nearby factories, particularly the Latoof and Callil clothing factory, which were happy to employ migrant women. By October 1951 the factory was employing 300 migrant women from the nearby Centre including 77 widows. A social worker report specifically addressing the situation for unsupported mothers noted the success of their rehabilitation in this context and the potential for the attainment of economic independence.⁶²

Archival documents indicate the rapid uptake of transfers of unsupported mothers from other centres, including Uranquinty and Bonegilla, to Benalla.⁶³ The suitability of this work solution is evidenced by the pressure placed on the Officer in Charge of Pre-School Services, Olga Leshen, to make an exception in the kindergarten arrangements at this Centre so that the children of unsupported mothers working in the nearby factories could attend the Centre kindergarten between 7.45 am and 5 pm, including during holidays, rather than the normal half-day session.⁶⁴ For women like Mrs S, a Polish widow with three children aged three to nine, the transfer from the Wacol Centre in Queensland to Benalla is described as 'the opportunity of a fresh start and employment in the factory adjacent to the camp'.⁶⁵

Despite initial enthusiasm, in the long term, the use of Benalla as a centre for unsupported mothers and their children was problematic for the Department of Immigration. Many women remained in the Centre for very long periods of time, totally reliant on the system into which they had been placed and unable to assimilate into the Australian community. In retrospect Benalla has been labelled 'a sad and tragic camp where widows and single mothers were sent' (Sluga, 1988, p. 27) and even after its closure in 1967 Benalla was still being referred to in negative terms within official circles.⁶⁶ Alexandra Dellios has documented the long-term stigmatising impact of these discourses on the women and children who lived there. Where other post-World War Two migration stories have been celebrated and incorporated into heritage-making since the 1980s, the stories of unsupported mothers and their children have, until recently, been silenced (Dellios, unpublished). The struggle to carve out discursive space for these accounts alongside celebratory scripts focused on the economic

and social success of migrants has been described by Bruce Pennay's accounts of Benalla, including his article in this issue (Pennay, 2015, 2017).

6. 'Non-Compliants'

Archival documents and contemporary newspaper reports from the late 1940s and early 1950s identify occasional episodes of migrant non-compliance with government rules and regulations. However, with the exception of Andrew Hassam's work on the political mobilisation of British women against institutional catering practices (Hassam, 2009; Postiglione, 2010), historical accounts of migrant resistance in the government accommodation centres in this period have focused on the political actions of men. This body of scholarship features analysis of unemployed men's riots in 1952 and 1961 (see for example Bosworth, 1987; Pennay, 2011, p. 125), protesting DPs at the Finsbury/Pennington Centre in Adelaide (Agutter, 2013) and Italian men's protests against poor food (Hassam, 2009, pp. 328–329; Pennay, 2011, p. 120). It also charts the emergence of the rhetorical 'whinging Pom' in relation to British protests in general (Hammerton & Thomson, 2005, pp. 167–168, pp. 144–150; Hassam, 2005). This emphasis on men's activism has been observed in histories of Indigenous–settler relations in Australia by scholars calling for broader and more complex definitions of resistance and protest that recognise the agency and the effective political work of women (Horton, 2012; Russell, 2007). Indeed, Horton's work on Aboriginal women's protests focuses on letter writing, a form of gendered protest Andrew Hassam argues is key to differentiating British migrant protests from the protests of unemployed Italians in 1952. He writes that 'the centrality of the British wife and mother was crucial in mobilising' what Immigration Minister Harold Holt conceded was "the sympathy of well-meaning Australians" (Hassam, 2009, p. 331).

So what of the DP women? Archival records contain traces of these women's protests, including an account of women residents protesting against communal eating at Uranquinty Centre, in June 1950, by physically preventing other women from complying with the system and 'assaulting members of the staff'. These actions resulted in the women's families' transfer to an alternative Centre in an attempt to separate the troublemakers.⁶⁷ Similarly, newspaper reports tell of DP women protesting about camp conditions at Parkes Centre⁶⁸ and about reductions to rations at the Cowra Centre.⁶⁹

In regard to unsupported mothers in the Holding Centres, while we have not found evidence of organised protest or physical resistance attributed specifically to this group, we illustrate their negotiation of the limited agency available to them. We highlight their covert forms of resistance to pressures to relinquish their children and accept residential employment. These forms of resistance were effective in that they caused considerable angst to those seeking to alleviate the social and economic costs of the migration scheme and they enabled the women to stay in the government-run accommodation with their children.

In September 1950, the Department of Labour made a report to the Department of Immigration on assimilation activities at Benalla Holding Centre. It described the residents as being resistant to guidance⁷⁰ and echoed other expressions of concern about the idleness and instability of some unsupported mothers and the effects of this on other camp residents and on future generations. Two months later a Migration Officer reported that there were five women at Woodside without breadwinners and expressed concern about the demeanour and attitudes of the women: 'from an assimilation aspect consideration should be given

to the employment of these women on camp duties lest their continued idleness ruin what slight incentive may remain to accept some responsibility for their own and their children's welfare.⁷¹ The officer offered an account of each of the women. For example, Mrs G was a widow with five children under 16, one of whom was living with her married sister. Mrs G had no money, no maintenance and owed £230 in board to the Holding Centre. She had refused three offers of employment and 'Just recently she was offered a position ... but refused on the grounds that it was too far to walk. She claims sickness but cannot produce a medical certificate. This person is reported on most unfavourably from Woodside.'⁷² Another of the five was Miss K, single with a four-month-old, reportedly sent to employment at Beachport where she stayed only two days. The officer reported that she would only accept work in her profession as a telephonist but noted that she only spoke German. He continued that 'It is doubtful whether a female with a baby under 6 months can be directed to employment. She is possibly sheltering under the assumption that this cannot be done.' Miss K had no money, no maintenance, her social payments had ceased six weeks previously and she owed six weeks in board.⁷³ The sense of frustration, and at times dismay, that is conveyed in these accounts reveals not only the limits of the Department of Immigration's power to compel these women to work, but also the women's awareness of those limits. These resistant acts, including Miss K's attempt to negotiate the terms of her employment, can be read as forms of protest.

Such refusals to take employment and to move on from the Centre are reported elsewhere, including in relation to 24 widows and 36 children at Bonegilla. Of these, 15 widows and 27 children refused to leave the Centre.⁷⁴ At the Cunderdin Holding Centre in Western Australia, a similar situation became the subject of an inquiry in July 1951. Using an interpreter, 30 widows and unmarried mothers were interviewed. All but three were found to be unemployable on three grounds: their age; their inadequate English language skills; and, finally, the fact that 'most desired to retain their children and not put them in Institutions and it meant that no employment which offered accommodation was available to them with more than one child.'⁷⁵

Miss V. Murphy, a social worker reporting on Benalla in 1956, wrote of 'a special hard core of six women who have problems' for which no solution could be found. Among them was one deserted mother of two children described thus:

a trouble maker in the camp and has a bad influence on other women. She has a strong dynamic personality and qualities which if she turned into socially acceptable channels could help her succeed in any community. ... she uses these qualities to outwit the other residents and staff.⁷⁶

This woman captured the attention and spent the energies of Murphy and the management team at Benalla. The issue she created by refusing to relinquish one or both children in order to work was just the beginning. Her social influence extended her impact and the fear of a contagious resistance exacerbated by the dynamism – the charisma even – of this woman, is clear in Murphy's account. In the conclusion of her report Murphy sought to understand these women in the contexts of their histories. She suggested that they 'suffer from issues of displacement and isolation. ... They have been in camps of one kind or another for ten years or more. They have lost initiative and are fearful of losing the protection of the camps.'⁷⁷ While Murphy's account offers a fuller and more empathic explanation for these women's continuing residence in the Holding Centre than many other accounts, where Murphy saw a loss of initiative, we argue there was active resistance. These women made choices to refuse forms of state-imposed institutionalisation – for themselves as live-in domestic servants,

and for their children as temporary (or permanent) wards of the state – in favour of a familiar, safe and stable environment where families could remain together.

7. Conclusion

Originally designed to be places of transition, the Holding Centres had become homes, if at times uncomfortable homes, for mothers whose opportunities to conform to images of assimilated family life had proven extremely limited. Their married counterparts who could afford to transition to life on the outside, albeit with the double load of paid work and domestic labour, more readily complied with the visions of assimilation spun to the dominant population. From the perspective of government agencies, unsupported mothers represented economic and social failures to assimilate.

The goal of placing the women in residential employment and the children in temporary or permanent care tested the compliance of unsupported DP mothers. Social workers described these resisting women as ‘non-compliants’, ‘the unwanted’ and the ‘hard-core’⁷⁸ problems. Their refusal to be separated from their children was both the central driver and key component of their resistance. The descriptions of their idleness and non-compliance indicate their refusal to be channelled into the labour force in ways that would compromise their relationships with their children and present all manner of possible vicissitudes, in contrast to the relative security and stability available to them as families in the Holding Centres, albeit under the watchful eye of the Department of Immigration. We read in these descriptions traces of the limited agency that unsupported mothers were able to bring to bear on their own lives and the lives of their children in the Holding Centres.

Notes

1. The so-called Hard Core consisted of DPs who were aged, disabled or required treatment in institutions, unaccompanied children, and unmarried mothers/widows and their children. The great fear was that these people would become a burden on the receiving nation’s government.
2. National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 21.134, Immigration – Displaced Persons – General.
3. National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 21.134, Immigration – Displaced Persons – General.
4. Note that although official policy allowed for single fathers and their children to apply to come to Australia as refugees the only evidence we have found of single fathers in the migrant accommodation system are those who were widowed after arrival or whose wives absconded. We do not believe they represent a substantive cohort.
5. The term ‘Australian way of life’ came into use in the 1940s and was used extensively throughout society from its use in advertising vernacular to government policy. Although vague, the term evoked images of middle-class material comforts, family life replete with traditional gendered roles, and the enjoyment of healthy outdoor recreation as a supplement to British traditions. It suggested a self-deprecating humour, friendliness and sense of fairness. For discussion on this term see White (1981). For contemporary discussion see Stanner (1953). Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe’s landmark book *Single Mothers and Their Children* (Swain & Howe, 1995) movingly illustrates the marginalisation suffered by single mothers in Australia in this period, many of whom were forced to relinquish their children.
6. National Archives Australia: A445, 140/5/6, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare.
7. National Archives Australia: A438, 1950/7/387, Conference on Duties of Social Workers.
8. The aim of this agreement was to try to resettle the enormous number of displaced people who remained in Europe following the end of World War Two. Australia was one of a number of countries that set up facilities in Europe to screen and select ‘suitable’ refugees who were

then transported to Australia on IRO organised ships. For more information on the Australian refugee intake see Kunz (1988).

9. Australia aimed to increase its population by 2% per annum with 1% of this increase achieved through immigration. The DPs were the first refugees to arrive and in the 1950s and 1960s would be joined by other refugees from Eastern Europe. Australia also negotiated a series of assisted passage agreements with Britain and European governments. These assisted migrants were eligible for accommodation in migrant centres. By contrast non-assisted migrants (those who paid their own way or were sponsored by relatives or companies in Australia) were not eligible for accommodation.
10. National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio Representatives & preparation of statement for circulation to press & radio editors.
11. National Archives Australia: A445, 200/1/5, Medical – Displaced Persons. Policy & Procedure in regard to Migrants & Applicants, for Landing Permits.
12. National Archives Australia: A445, 200/1/5, Medical – Displaced Persons. Policy & Procedure in regard to Migrants & Applicants, for Landing Permits.
13. There remains considerable debate in Australia about the humanitarian objectives of the post-war acceptance of DPs. See for example Franklin (2009) and Neumann (2004).
14. National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/1145, Unaccompanied Youths and Children.
15. The authors have deliberately used pseudonyms and initials for the women referenced in this paper out of respect for their and their families' privacy.
16. National Archives Australia: A12052, 106–109, DOJCZMAN Kazimiera born 6 March 1912; Maria born 25 March 1939; Jozefa born 19 July 1940; Hedwig born 24 April 1948.
17. Harold Holt succeeded Arthur Calwell as Minister for Immigration in 1949.
18. National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/27104, Widows with Dependent Children at Immigration Centres – Employment and Accommodation.
19. The locations and number of Holding Centres did vary across the years as centres closed or as Reception and Training Centres such as Bonegilla also took on the role of Holding Centres to meet demand. The key centres were Greta, Cowra, Uranquinty, Parkes and Scheyville in New South Wales; Rushworth, Benalla, Somers, West Sale and Mildura in Victoria; Wacol, Enoggera, Stewart and Cairns in Queensland; Northam, Cunderdin and Holden in Western Australia; and Woodside and Mallala in South Australia.
20. National Archives Australia: K279, 1948/979 Part 2, Migrant workers' hostels – general [Australian Construction Services] [Part 2]. Note that a third level of accommodation was also provided in the form of migrant hostels (for example Glenelg and Finsbury/Pennington in South Australia) to house migrants arriving on assisted passages. However, sometimes DP families and single men were also housed in such complexes.
21. National Archives Australia: B550, 1948/23/5138, Displaced Persons. Policy – Placement of Family Groups and Heads of Families.
22. For example, in 2000 the New South Wales Standing Committee on Social Issues noted that 'The availability of ... appropriate child care was extremely limited in the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1960s there were only six nurseries in NSW which catered for under two-year-olds and these were all in metropolitan Sydney.' Standing Committee on Social Issues (2000, p. 34).
23. In 1949 the Department of Immigration established its own Social Welfare Section which employed over 30, mostly female social workers across the country to work with new arrivals. See National Archives Australia: A445, 140/5/6, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare.
24. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial.
25. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/7, Social Welfare – Special Problems, Marital.
26. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports – New South Wales.
27. See note 25.
28. *Ibid.*, The social workers are not explicit in the risk posed by the presence of single men but the implication is clearly that married women in the absence of their husbands may strike up illicit relationships with these single men.

29. National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/25969, Placement of Displaced Persons – Widows with Children – Policy.
30. National Archives Australia: B550, 1950/23/1941, Displaced Persons – placement of widows with children – procedure.
31. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial. Note that the actual breakdowns of nationalities, etc. are not present in this archive collection and appear not to have survived.
32. See note 18.
33. National Archives Australia: A446, 1962/65241, Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Hostels and Centres Part 1.
34. Ibid.
35. National Archives Australia: J25, 1966/2798, Social Welfare – Migrant Accommodation – Problem Cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels].
36. National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section – Social Workers' Reports – Benalla Centre (Victoria).
37. Ibid.
38. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/10, Social Welfare. Widows and Unmarried Mothers with Dependent Children.
39. Ibid., National Archives Australia: Social Welfare Section – Social Workers' Reports – Benalla Centre (Victoria).
40. See note 18.
41. See note 38.
42. National Archives Australia: D1917, D15/50, Employment of Displaced Persons – widows with children.
43. See note 38.
44. National Archives Australia: D1917, D47/47 Part 3, DP Scheme Instructions Part 3.
45. Article reproduced in National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/27104, Widows with Dependent Children at Immigration Centres – Employment and Accommodation.
46. 'Migrant Widows Want Work and Homes' (1950, p. 8).
47. See note 45.
48. See note 29.
49. National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/25969, Displaced Persons – placement of widows with children – procedure.
50. see note 29.
51. National Archives Australia: A445, 220/52/13, Report on creches in migrant centres.
52. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial.
53. Social workers report that women usually come to agreements with other migrant mothers and grandmothers within the centres whereby the mother pays £1/10/- per week to the childminder. Concern is expressed that these childminders, although kindly, have no training and may be in charge of up to eight children under three years old. See National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section – Social Workers' Reports – Benalla Centre (Victoria).
54. National Archives Australia: PP6/1, 1950/H/4191, Approved Institutions transfer of Displaced Persons, minors.
55. Ibid.
56. National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports – New South Wales.
57. National Archives Australia: A434, 1949/3/24452, Placement of Children of Displaced Persons who are Widows.
58. Infant Life Protection Acts gave the states of Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania powers to regulate the institutions (or in some cases private homes, e.g. in NSW) where children were placed (Swain, 2014). The provisions of these Acts enabled temporary placement. See Standing Committee on Social Issues (2000, p. 34).
59. See note 38
60. Department of Immigration social workers filed regular reports on their work in the centres. In these reports the categories of cases dealt with is given a numerical figure so that these reports

almost always include the number of adoptions organised for the period. See for example National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/1, Senior social workers annual reports – all states and National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports – New South Wales.

61. See note 38
62. See note 38.
63. See note 29.
64. National Archives Australia: A445, 220/51/88, Benalla – pre-school play centre.
65. See note 35.
66. See for example National Archives Australia: C3939, N1963/75029, Immigration – The Reception and Aftercare of Single Female Migrants [Box 165].
67. National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/24052, Uranquinty Centre – Report on Disturbances 13 June 1950.
68. National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio Representatives & preparation of statement for circulation to press & radio editors.
69. 'Migrant Women "Mutiny" against Ration Change' (1950, p. 1).
70. 15 September 1950 letter Department of Labour and National Service to Commonwealth Employment Service – five employers' forms sent – widows 'proved to be unwilling and useless'. There are two more employers waiting in Brisbane but nothing forthcoming 'I would welcome some advice as to the cause of the delay. Possibly it is because few widows understand English or Australian domestic duties. If this is the case, I think we should be frank with employers, rather than send these unfortunates hundreds of miles into the bush, only to meet with disillusionment.' National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/10, Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.
71. See note 18.
72. See note 18.
73. See note 18.
74. See note 30.
75. See note 38.
76. See note 33.
77. See note 33.
78. See note 38.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their very engaged and constructive feedback.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Research undertaken for this work was supported by the Australian Research Council under Linkage Grant [LP120100553] for 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants'.

Archival Sources

National Archives Australia: A12052, 106–109, DOJCZMAN Kazimiera born 6 March 1912; Maria born 25 March 1939; Jozefa born 19 July 1940; Hedwig born 24 April 1948.

National Archives Australia: A434, 1949/3/24452, Placement of Children of Displaced Persons who are Widows.

National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/1145, Unaccompanied Youths and Children.

- National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/24052, Uranquinty Centre – Report on Disturbances 13 June 1950.
- National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/25969, Placement of Displaced Persons– Widows with Children – Policy.
- National Archives Australia: A434, 1950/3/27104, Widows with Dependent Children at Immigration Centres – Employment and Accommodation.
- National Archives Australia: A436, 1948/5/330, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio Representatives & preparation of statement for circulation to press & radio editors.
- National Archives Australia: A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section – Social Workers’ Reports – Benalla Centre (Victoria).
- National Archives Australia: A445, 112/1/10, Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 140/5/6, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 200/1/5, Medical – Displaced Persons. Policy & Procedure in regard to Migrants & Applicants, for Landing Permits.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 220/51/88, Benalla – pre-school play centre.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 220/52/13, Report on creches in migrant centres.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/10, Social Welfare. Widows and Unmarried Mothers with Dependent Children.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 276/2/7, Social Welfare – Special Problems, Marital.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/1, Senior social workers annual reports – all states.
- National Archives Australia: A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports – New South Wales.
- National Archives Australia: A446, 1962/65241, Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Hostels and Centres Part 1.
- National Archives Australia: B550, 1948/23/5138, Displaced Persons. Policy – Placement of Family Groups and Heads of Families.
- National Archives Australia: B550, 1950/23/1941, Displaced Persons – placement of widows with children – procedure.
- National Archives Australia: C3939, N1963/75029, Immigration – The Reception and Aftercare of Single Female Migrants [Box 165].
- National Archives Australia: CP815/1, 21.134, Immigration – Displaced Persons – General.
- National Archives Australia: D1917, D15/50, Employment of Displaced Persons – widows with children.
- National Archives Australia: D1917, D47/47 Part 3, DP Scheme Instructions Part 3.
- National Archives Australia: J25, 1966/2798, Social Welfare – Migrant Accommodation – Problem Cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels].
- National Archives Australia: K279, 1948/979 Part 2, Migrant workers’ hostels – general [Australian Construction Services] [Part 2].
- National Archives Australia: PP6/1, 1950/H/4191, Approved Institutions transfer of Displaced Persons, minors.

References

- Agutter, K. (2013). Displaced persons and the ‘continuum of mobility’ in the South Australian hostel system. In M. A. Kleinig & E. Richards (Eds.), *On the Wing: Mobility before and after emigration to Australia, Visible immigrants* (Vol. 7) (pp. 136–152). Anchor Books Australia: Spit Junction, NSW.
- Agutter, K. (2016a). Assimilation through play: Migrant hostel play centres in post-war Australia. *International Journal of Play*, 5, 277–291.
- Agutter, K. (2016b). Fated to be Orphans: The consequences of Australia’s Post-War resettlement policy on refugee children. *Children Australia*, 41, 224–231.

- Australian Liaison Committee of Women's National Organisations. (1951). Woman Citizen. In O. L. Ziegler (Ed.), *Official commemorative book: Jubilee of the commonwealth of Australia* (pp. 72a–72d). Sydney NSW: Angus and Robertson.
- Bosworth, R., & Wilton, J. (1981). A lost history?: The study of European migration to Australia. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 27, 221–231.
- Bosworth, R. (1987). Conspiracy of the consuls? Official Italy and the Bonegilla Riot of 1952. *Historical Studies*, 22, 547–568.
- Child Migration Plan Approved (1948). *The Advertiser*. Adelaide.
- DeLaet, D. L. (1999). Introduction: The invisibility of women in scholarship on international migration'. In G. A. Kelson & D. L. De Laet (Eds.), *Gender and Migration* (pp. 1–20). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Dellios, A. (2015). Commemorating migrant camps: Vernacular memories in official spaces. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 39, 252–271.
- Dellios, A. (2016). Displaced persons, family separation and the work contract in postwar Australia. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 40, 418–432.
- Dellios, A. (unpublished). 'It was just you and your child': Single migrant mothers, generational storytelling, and Australia's migrant heritage, article currently under review (cited with permission of the author).
- Deportation Threat To Migrant Women; Camp life Protest. (1949, September 17). *Tribune*, Sydney.
- Eubel, S. (2010). 'Flying Fräuleins': The construction of single migrant women in discourses on migration in Australia and West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 17, 743–758.
- Featherstone, L., & Kaladelfos, A. (2016). *Sex crimes in the fifties*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Franklin, J. (2009). *Calwell, catholicism and the origins of multicultural Australia*. Proceedings of Catholics in Australian Public Life since 1788, Strathfield New South Wales. Australian Catholic Historical Society, 41–55.
- Freedman, R. & (Producer), & Turkiewicz, S. (Director)., (2013). *Once My Mother [Motion picture]*. Australia: Change Focus Media.
- Haebich, A. (2000). *Broken circles. Fragmenting indigenous Australian lives 1800-2000*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.
- Haebich, A. (2008). *Spining the dream: assimilation in Australia 1950–1970*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press.
- Hammerton, A. J., & Thomson, A. (2005). *Ten pound poms Australia's invisible migrants*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press.
- Hassam, A. (2005). From heroes to whingers: Changing attitudes to British migrants, 1947 to 1977. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 51, 79–93.
- Hassam, A. (2009). Hostels and communal feeding are not the British way of life. *Food, Culture & Society*, 12, 313–334.
- Heyes, T. H. E. (1951). Australia's 'stimulating adventure'. *The New Era in Home and School*, 32, 20–23.
- Horton, J. (2012). Rewriting political history: Letters from aboriginal people in Victoria, 1886-1919. *History Australia*, 9, 157–181.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997). *Bringing Them Home. Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
- Jordens, A.-M. (1993). Migrant supporting mothers and the state 1948-54. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 17, 47–57.
- Jupp, J. (1966). *Arrivals and Departures*. Melbourne: Cheshire-Lansdowne.
- Kenny, P., Higgins, D., Soloff, C., & Sweid, R. (2012). *Past adoption experiences: National Research Study on the Service Response to Past Adoption Practices* (Research Report No. 21). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Kokegei, K. (2012). *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960* (PhD Thesis). Adelaide: University of Adelaide.
- Kunek, S. (1993). Brides, wives, and single women: Gender and immigration. *Lilith a Feminist History Journal*, 8, 99–100.

- Kunz, E. F. (1988). *Displaced persons: Calwell's new Australians*. Sydney: Australian National University Press.
- Markus, A., & Taft, M. (2015). Postwar immigration and assimilation: A reconceptualisation. *Australian Historical Studies*, 46, 234–251.
- Migrant Widows want Work and Homes. (1950, July 17). *Goulburn Evening Press*, NSW.
- Migrant women “mutiny” against ration change. (1950, November 20). *West Australian*, Perth
- Milanov, K. (1951). Towards the assimilation of new Australians. *The Australian Quarterly*, 23, 71–78.
- Morris, S. (2001). *Uranquinty remembers: A migrant experience 1848–1952*. Wagga Wagga Australia: Uranquinty Progress Association.
- Murphy, H. B. M. (1952). The assimilation of refugee immigrants in Australia. *Population Studies*, 5, 179–206.
- Murphy, J. (2000). *Imagining the fifties: Private sentiment and political culture in menzies' Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Neumann, K. (2004). *Refuge Australia: Australia's humanitarian record*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Neumann, K. (2015). *Across the seas: Australia's response to refugees – a history*. Melbourne: Black Inc.
- Pennay, B. (2011). *Remembering Bonegilla's Refugee Riot*. *Eureka street*, 21, 60–61.
- Pennay, B. (2015). *Benalla Migrant camp: A difficult heritage*. Benalla, Victoria: Benalla Migrant Camp Inc.
- Postiglione, N. (2010). 'It was just horrible': The food experience of immigrants in 1950s Australia. *History Australia*, 7, 9.1–9.16.
- Russell, L. (2007). 'Dirty domestics and worse cooks': Aboriginal women's agency and domestic frontiers, Southern Australia, 1800–1850. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 28, 18–46.
- Sestokas, J. (2010). *Welcome to little Europe: Displaced persons and the North camp*. Sale, Victoria, Australia: Little Chicken Publishing.
- Simic, S. (2014). Bachelors of misery and proxy brides: Marriage, migration and assimilation, 1947–1973. *History Australia*, 11, 149–174.
- Sluga, G. (1988). *Bonegilla 'a place of no hope'*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.
- Standing Committee on Social Issues. (2000). *Releasing the past: adoption practices, 1950–1998: final report*. Sydney, N.S.W: New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council.
- Stanner, W. E. H. (1953). The Australian Way of Life. In W. V. Aughterson (Ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia* (pp. 3–14). Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire.
- Swain, S. with R. Howe (1995). *Single mothers and their children, disposal, punishment and survival*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Swain, S. (2014). *History of child protection legislation. royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse*. Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia.
- White, R. (1979). The Australian way of life. *Historical studies*, 18, 528–545.
- Zahra, T. (2009). Lost children: Displacement, family, and nation in postwar Europe. *The Journal of Modern History*, 81, 45–86.

Chapter 11 Article 6: *Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children*

The following article, published in *Children Australia*, discusses how the policies related to migration and assimilation in the 1950s resulted in negative impacts on the children of unsupported mothers.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Title of Paper | Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children |
| Publication Status | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Agutter, K. (2016). Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children. <i>Children Australia</i> , 41(3), 224-231. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2016.15 |

Principal Author

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------|--------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | | |
| Contribution to the Paper | This paper is based on my own original research and is entirely my own work | | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 100% | | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | | |
| Signature | | Date | 8-5-17 |

Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children

Karen Agutter

Department of History, University of Adelaide, South Australia

Between 1947 and 1953, Australia received over 170,000 Displaced People from Europe including widows and unmarried mothers. These refugees were expected to conform to the policies and expectations of the State, in particular the adherence to a 2-year work contract. This was an impossibility for many mothers who could not find work or accommodation outside of the government supplied migrant accommodation centres, and who, as a consequence, resorted to placing their children, either temporarily or permanently, in institutions or for adoption. Through an examination of archival documents, this paper examines the policies that resulted in migrant child placement and adoption and considers the role played by Department of Immigration social workers. It asks why, when migrant children were considered amongst the most desirable of new arrivals, were many fated to become orphans?

■ **Keywords:** displaced persons, migrant children, adoption, child placement, migrant hostels

Migrant women and their children who arrived in Australia as widows and unmarried mothers under the Displaced Persons (DPs) Scheme following the Second World War entered a society that was deeply invested in the nuclear family, in the ideal of the home and woman's place within it, caring for the family and raising children (Murphy, 2000).¹ For women with children who fell outside of this ideal, there was little financial or other assistance and working mothers, even if day care had been readily available, were generally frowned upon. As Howe and Swain (1993) explain, the term widow 'had been traditionally used loosely in welfare circles to cover deserted wives, women living in de facto relationships and single mothers as well as married women whose husband had died' (p. 44). However, following the war, the anger expressed by some community groups at the inclusion of de facto wives and other women not considered to be 'genuine' widows resulted in the use of the term 'dependent female' (Howe & Swain, 1993, p. 44). Whatever term was used, and despite the increase in the number of widows post-war, as Aitken-Swan (1962) contends, even within the wider community: '[t]he widow is called apathetic if she stays at home and she is blamed if she goes to work' (p. 3).

Australian mothers were entitled to some government assistance through child endowment and from 1942 there was also the option of a Widow's Pension.² Benefits paid under either scheme, however, were very low and difficult, if

not impossible, to live on (Curthoys, 1987). For DP women and their children, the social and economic situation was even more difficult. To be eligible for the widow's pension a recipient had to be an Australian citizen and under the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* naturalisation was impossible unless the individual had been a resident in Australia for five years. Furthermore, as historian Damousi (2001) explains in her study of Australian war widows, the 'psychological impact of war remains long after the event, not just for soldiers, but also for those around them who also have to absorb the legacy of war' (p. 5). For refugee women and children, there were additional issues of displacement and isolation. Far from the countries of their birth and without English or knowledge of Australia, many had already spent years in camps in Europe and, as one social worker report states, they had lost all hope and initiative, and were fearful of moving into the wider community (National Archives Australia [NAA], A446, 1962/65241).

There were further issues to contend with in the case of unmarried mothers. Single mothers, as Howe and Swain (1993) explain, challenged the patriarchal state and posed a

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Karen Agutter, Department of History, Napier Building, University of Adelaide, Adelaide 5005, South Australia.

E-mail: karen.agutter@adelaide.edu.au

threat to the ideal of the family, which was at its economic and social base. In the years leading up to World War Two, the single mother was considered the villain to be punished and the ex-nuptial child was generally the innocent victim (Howe & Swain, 1993). In post-war Australia, with an even greater emphasis on the traditional nuclear family, these attributions remained and were perhaps enhanced for the ex-nuptial migrant child. Their status as future citizens and the overarching belief in the migrant child as 'readily assimilable' and therefore the very best of 'New Australians' (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 14 August 1948, p. 19) immediately raised their welfare as an issue.³

Given the poor social status and economic difficulties of single mothers already apparent within Australia, it is hard to pinpoint the exact reasons for the acceptance of DP widows and unmarried mothers as part of the post-war refugee intake. While other scholars have debated Australian, and particularly Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell's motivations,⁴ this paper considers how the presence of this cohort significantly challenged the three key policy foundations of the post-World War Two programme of vigorous population expansion. The policies of record were: the mandatory 2-year work contract for all refugees and assisted European immigrants; the provision of government-run hostel accommodation for newly arrived migrants; and the overarching policy of assimilation of migrants into the 'Australian way of life'.⁵

Following a short review of the background to the large scale immigration scheme that led to so many new arrivals in Australia, this paper considers how the influx of migrant widows and unmarried mothers placed stress on the key policies of the immigration system. It reflects upon the responses of the authorities at the time, in particular the Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section, and how these impacted on the migrants themselves, especially the children of unmarried or widowed women. It will be proposed that the perhaps unintended, and yet potentially foreseeable, consequences were a high incidence of migrant child placement and adoption amongst this cohort, which resulted in long lasting issues of abandonment and betrayal.

Methodology

The migrant children (and their mothers) who are the subject of this paper fall within a much wider multi-disciplinary scholarship of adoption and child placement practices in Australia. Recent inquiries including *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record* (2001), a report on child migration and *Forgotten Australians* (2004), a report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children, and subsequent national apologies have raised public awareness and stimulated a wide variety of scholarly responses.⁶ However, within the existing literature, the consideration of 'migrant children' has largely been limited to those who arrived as a consequence of the direct policy of child migration (in particular those from the United Kingdom and Malta). By

contrast, this paper considers how the children of post-War European migrants became part of the wider child welfare system as a result of immigration policies mainly directed towards adult migrants, rather than the children themselves.

The research for this paper has been extracted from the extensive archival material accessed as part of a larger project examining the experiences of refugees and post-Second World War migrants who passed through government-run migrant accommodation centres.⁷ This article has drawn mainly on Department of Immigration records, including departmental social worker reports. These regular reports are often statistical in nature, but also address particular individual cases as exemplars of issues facing new arrivals. The reports are naturally coloured by the individual biases and agendas of social workers, many of whom were happy to work within the government policy of assimilation, but some of whom were more questioning of the efficacy of the policy. The use of the broader Department of Immigration record set and contemporary newspaper reports also helps to situate the exemplars within the broader policy context.

Background to Australia's post World War Two immigration boom

Australia's acceptance of over 170,000 DPs from Europe over the period 1947 to 1953 has been described by some scholars as an immigration revolution (Markus, Jupp, & McDonald, 2009), with the mass migration scheme completely altering the face of Australia. The reason for this significant change from Australia's previous stance on immigration, based on the so-called 'White Australia' policy,⁸ may have had some grounding in humanitarian diplomacy, but was also certainly driven by the economic and political position of Australia at the time. Post war, in response to falling birth rates, the desire to build the economy and reacting to a perceived need for a much larger populace for reasons of defence and fear of invasion, the Australian Government had revived the phrase 'populate or perish'.⁹ It proposed that the population of just over 7 million should increase by 2% per annum, 1% of which would come from immigration.

1947 proved to be a defining year in the advancement of Australia's immigration programme. Serious manpower shortages were reported. Vital industries, including coal mining, steel, timber and the producers of other building materials, reported that all labour resources had been tapped. There was insufficient labour to maintain current outputs in manufacturing, expansion was impossible (Markus, 1984), and as a result a new labour source was essential. This lack of industrial expansion and calls for a greater workforce coincided with a severe housing shortage, estimated just two years earlier to be in excess of 300,000 dwellings (Macintyre, 2015).

At the same time, on the other side of the world, Australia becoming a signatory to the constitution of the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) opened new possibilities to a government struggling to overcome the limited recruitment

of desirable immigrants (i.e. those from the United Kingdom and northern Europe). At the end of the war, there were an estimated 12 million DPs in Europe (Persian, 2015) and even by 1947 more than 1.6 million remained in over 900 camps in Germany, Austria and France (Markus, 1984).

Australian community support was considered essential for the success of the post-war immigration scheme and, alongside the careful selection of DPs, extensive publicity and ‘conditioning campaigns’ were instituted aimed at the Australian public (see for example NAA, A436, 1948/5/330). Initially, Australian selection officers in Europe concentrated on healthy single men and, to a lesser extent, single women because alongside the shortages of workers in industry, there were also shortages in traditional female occupations including nursing and domestic work.) However, by April 1948, as the number of available single DPs fell, and in consideration of the fact that Australia needed not only ‘good and willing workers’ but also ‘prospective breeders’ (NAA, A445, 200/1/5), family groups were included. In February 1949, Calwell extended the acceptable DP criteria to include widows, deserted wives and unmarried mothers with children.

Work Contracts, Hostel Accommodation and the Impact on Single Mothers

While some receiving nations contracted DPs to specific companies, only those going to Australia and New Zealand were required to sign up to work contracts before departure from Europe (Kunz, 1988). These contracts stated that the migrant must remain in the employment found for them by the authorities for a period of up to two years. Furthermore, they prohibited the changing of employment without the consent of the Department of Immigration. Accepting that the future of Australia’s mass migration policy rested on the success of the DP scheme, Kunz (1988) argues that Calwell used the two year work contract to prevent the growth of unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants and ‘thus ensure the green light for further mass intakes’ (p. 143).

History had shown that the most likely groups to oppose the importation of ‘foreign labour’ were the unions and the two year work contracts ensured that migrant workers could only be placed where they would not deprive an Australian of employment. Furthermore, once placed the migrant had to receive award wages and work under (union) award conditions. Migrants were also encouraged to join the union (although this was not specifically written into the contract). If a DP failed to comply with the conditions of the contract, they could be deported under Section 4 of the Immigration Restriction Act. In practice, the two year work contracts ensured that the Australian government could control the employment of DPs and therefore move them into positions of perceived need, often in arduous working conditions.

One of the major problems with the placement of DPs into work was that of accommodation. As noted above, post-war Australia was in the midst of a severe housing shortage.

Although labour was essential to the ultimate correction of this shortage, labourers had to be housed. The solution was twofold. DPs who were to be employed by government utilities or private companies were only placed where employer provided accommodation was available (NAA, D1917, D24/46 Part 2). In order to fulfil the obligations of the IRO agreement and to ensure harmony within the general population, it was specified that this accommodation ‘must be at least equal to the standards which are customary for Australian workers in the particular employment concerned’ and could only be provided if it was ‘not likely to prejudice the accommodation needs of the general public’ (NAA, MP239/7, 573/6/1). For others, Commonwealth Government migrant accommodation initially took the form of Reception and Training Centres, often utilising ex-army camps, such as Bonegilla and Bathurst. As their collective name implies, as well as providing initial accommodation, these centres also provided lessons in the English language and an introduction to Australian history, democracy, and customs and values – commonly referred to as the Australian way of life. It was from these centres that DPs were placed in employment (NAA, MP239/7, 573/6/1). Without consideration of previous employment, education or training, men were placed in primarily labouring positions, often in remote areas, with the principal aims of improving manufacturing output and providing labour for infrastructure projects. Single women, after some initial placements in administrative positions, were generally placed in domestic, cleaning and carer positions with many staffing mental institutions and tuberculosis sanatoriums.

With the arrival of family groups, and eventually widows and single mothers, a second level of accommodation for women and children not in employment became necessary and to meet this need the government established a series of Holding Centres. Like the earlier Reception and Training Centres, Holding Centres were usually established in ex-army or air force bases, provided temporary accommodation and worked on the principal of communal living with cafeteria style food delivery and communal ablutions. These centres, again as their name implies, were places where women and children waited either for their breadwinners to find accommodation for them or for them to complete their two year work contracts. For many women, and especially for women and children without breadwinners, Holding Centres often became long term residences.

DP widows, unmarried mothers and their children were sent initially to Reception and Training Centres such as Bonegilla with the expectation that they would be placed in employment and therefore fulfil their commitment under the work contract. While there is evidence that some women, mainly those with only one child, were successfully placed in mainly domestic situations, often in rural areas, the majority could not be placed and were then sent on to the Holding Centres where, even unemployed, they were expected to pay a weekly rent. Without work placements, widows and unmarried mothers could not fulfil their

contracts, they could not become self-supporting and many quickly ran up considerable debts. In November 1950 at the Woodside Centre in South Australia for example, one Lithuanian born widow, Elena, with her five children, who had arrived in April 1949 and was therefore among one of the first widows to arrive, reportedly already owed £230 (NAA, A434, 1950/3/27104).

As well as the incurring of debts, the inability to place women with dependent children into work also saw them remaining within the accommodation system for longer and longer periods of time. Aside from their failure to fulfil their work contracts, these 'long stayers' also had significant impacts on the other two key immigration policies. Since these dependent mothers and their children did not move through the accommodation system as planned, increasingly their continued presence restricted entry of new arrivals and, more importantly, prevented their progression towards assimilation into the wider community. The so-called 'problem cases' quickly became the focus of the newly-formed Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section (See for example, NAA, J25, 1966/2798).

Government Responses

As early as 1949, Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, had written to the Minister for Health and Social Services about the necessity for a co-ordinated plan for the assimilation of 'aliens', particularly former DPs. Calwell recognised that these refugees had:

no one to break down for them the first barriers of life in a strange country with its different language and customs . . . [and] their reception, preliminary training, education in the English language, employment and accommodation are the responsibility of my Department of Immigration. All these are matters which are vital to and inseparable from their general welfare. From the beginning it has been obvious that the case-work necessary to cope with personal and family difficulties could be undertaken only by Social Workers functioning as an integral part of my Department (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510).

The Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section was formed as a branch of the Aliens Assimilation Division in the same year (NAA, A445, 140/5/6) with the aim of employing thirty-seven, mainly female, social workers, although that target was never actually met (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510). By job description, the role of the social workers primarily involved identifying issues causing stress and discontent amongst migrants and referring cases to an appropriate volunteer agency for assistance (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). As Calwell explained to the Minister for Health, the 'assimilation and social welfare of the migrant is essentially a matter for every Australian citizen' so that paid staff, including social workers would not be used 'for work which will be undertaken by such bodies as the Country Women's Association, New Settlers' League, Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A.' (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510). The role of the Department

of Immigration social worker was, therefore, primarily to help DPs 'become happily absorbed into the community' by working as a liaison between the voluntary organisations, the Australian public and the migrant (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). The role was as much about educating and acclimatising the Australian public as in helping the migrant, or as their job descriptions stated to 'help cushion some of the effects upon the Australian community . . . thus bringing about a better mutual understanding' (NAA, D400, SA1959/3783).

In reality, as early reports from social workers in the accommodation centres highlight, their enormous caseloads brought them into contact with a wide range of issues including mental and other health problems, accommodation issues, financial problems and marital breakdowns. Their work also placed them in the middle of the nascent problems associated with widows and unmarried mothers. A typical approach of utilising church and other voluntary organisations as a solution to the key problems facing these women and their children is the example of an unmarried Italian woman and her two year old daughter, who with the aid of a Catholic Priest, were placed in employment with accommodation to enable them to move out of the Holding Centre and into the community whilst remaining together (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). Another approach to dealing with the problem of single mothers was to encourage them to marry. This had the added advantage of not only resolving the issue of the support of the dependant woman and her children but also worked towards addressing the issue of the balance of the sexes among DP arrivals.¹⁰ Hazel Dobson, Director of the Department of Immigration's Assimilation and Social Welfare Section, regularly expressed her belief that marriage was the 'only really satisfactory solution in many cases of widows with several young children'. Therefore she encouraged 'Social Workers, Church Workers and Good Neighbour Councils . . . to keep in mind the need for these women to be given opportunities to meet suitable men' (NAA, A437, 1950/6/173).

As more widows and unmarried mothers arrived the pressures placed upon the system grew. Social workers were evidently torn between their role in aiding assimilation and addressing the hardships that these women and their children were facing. Social worker reports express a wide variety of responses with some labelling their clients as 'hard core problems', non-compliants and misfits (See for example NAA, A445, 276/2/11). Others are far more sympathetic arguing that all they need is 'a bridge over which they can move from the Centre to the outer world. They need someone to help them over this bridge. They need both a push from the Centre and a pull into the community' (NAA, A446, 1962/65241). Whatever the response, the majority of social worker reports refer to these women and their children as their 'greatest challenges' (See for example NAA, A437, 1949/6/385).

A number of solutions were sought. In the first instance it was determined that:

from an assimilation aspect consideration should be given to the employment of these women on camp duties least their continued idleness ruin what slight incentive may remain to accept some responsibility for their own and their children's welfare (NAA, A434, 1950/3/27104).

However, as the number of widows and unmarried mothers in the accommodation centres increased, there was insufficient employment for them. Furthermore, as noted above, these centres were established as temporary housing; long term residents had a detrimental effect on the expected ongoing movement of people and more particularly on the policy of assimilation. Employment needed to be found within the community.

A targeted campaign to employ and/or accommodate a widow and child had some success and was seen as an ideal solution as it provided employment, accommodation and the potential for assimilation. A nationwide newspaper campaign, with a particular emphasis on rural areas, aimed to find homes for over 700 women and their children calling on Australians to 'accept the Christian and moral obligation of assisting these innocent victims of the war to find security and happiness in Australia' (See for example, *The Riverine Grazier*, 1950, p. 1). Despite the success of the campaign in placing more than 800 women in work with accommodation, still more than 700 women and many more children remained in the centres. The majority of those who had been placed in work had only one child and it was apparent to Dobson that women with more than one child would most likely remain in centres indefinitely (NAA, A445, 276/2/10).

Impacts on Children

The 'handicap of children' placed pressure on both the Department of Immigration and migrant mothers and one of the solutions was to remove children (usually temporarily) into orphanages and other accommodation facilities. Social worker reports comment that:

[r]equests for child placement have been numerous. In the case of widows who are unable to obtain employment with their children, it has been considered justifiable to render some assistance to the mother in arranging for separate accommodation for their children (NAA, A445, 276/2/11).

The total number of children so placed, as in the wider community (Penglase, 352), is very difficult to determine, but as an example we know that in 1949–1950 some 67 children were placed from accommodation centres in New South Wales alone (NAA, A445, 276/3/2). This number included temporary and permanent or adoption placements but there is no indication of whether the mothers were widows or single women.

Placements were most commonly made through the churches and other charitable organisations such as Salvation Army homes. A 1951 social work report from Perth gives some indication of this, outlining that, of the 51 placements made that year, Clontarf and St Joseph's Orphanages

took most of the children but some were sent to the Wanslea Home for Children, to the Salvation Army Home and one to the Presbyterian Home (NAA, A445, 276/3/1).¹¹ Children were generally placed in homes where spaces were available with no consideration for religious or cultural beliefs. For example, two children of Greek Orthodox denomination from the Woodside Centre were placed in a Church of England and a Roman Catholic children's home, respectively (NAA, A445, 276/3/4). Little consideration was apparently given to family separation, and siblings, especially when there were large age gaps, were often placed in different institutions (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969).

For the mothers of these children the financial burden did not end with placement. Reports indicate a great variety of charges across the different institutions. While one social worker claimed that although most institutions requested a small weekly sum for the upkeep of the child, it was 'never insisted upon and the amount is usually left to the parent to decide' (NAA, A445, 276/2/11). In Perth however, the social worker noted that the financial difficulties of placement:

cannot be overlooked – where widows have two, three or four children, it becomes impossible for them to meet their commitments, (£1 per week for each child at least) out of their wages and in this community there are no agencies to help them, the State Department being somewhat unwilling to take on the responsibilities of helping to pay for the children in homes (NAA, A445, 276/3/1).

Therefore, the institutions were often left to cover the cost of care for these children. This caused a degree of public outcry with newspaper reports claiming that these migrant children were jamming welfare homes (see for example, *The Argus*, 1952).

For the Australian public, the placement of children was often seen as the migrant taking advantage of a system designed for the Australian born or as a sign of the inherent weakness in the migrants themselves. Sensational headlines claimed 'Migrants Rush Orphanages', quoting a Sydney Social Worker that 'many New Australians were trying to place their children in orphanages or denominational schools so that the parents could get accommodation . . . [but] in some cases they simply wanted to get rid of 'problem children'' (*The Sunday Herald*, 1951, p. 5). A report in the *Adelaide Advertiser* (1951) that migrants were 'Selling Children' was rapidly disseminated across the nation's newspapers. According to a church official, migrants were so desperate to find accommodation that they were selling some of their children and if you knew the right person you could pay 5 pound for a child in a hostel (migrant accommodation centre) because migrants were 'that desperate to decrease the number of children' (*The Advertiser*, 1951, p. 3). Furthermore, many newspapers openly blamed the problem on the arrival of unmarried or widowed mothers and their illegitimate children who had been born in DP camps in Europe (*The Sunday Herald*, 1951). Although newspapers later reported that these particular claims were

unsubstantiated, ongoing reports highlight the resentment of some sectors of the community that these women, and their children, were taking the places needed by Australians.

Calwell, and the Department of Immigration, were always aware of the potential for local resentment and Dobson warned that when dealing with the problem of dependent migrant women it was difficult to suggest schemes 'without arousing resentment because of the number of 'old' Australians, including widows, whose position is desperate' (NAA, A445, 276/2/10). In response to complaints, Calwell wrote that it had 'never been the intention that migrant children should occupy accommodation in State Institutions to the detriment of Australian children' (NAA, A434, 1949/3/24452). However, the policies that he and his Department had put in place (the two year work contract, the need to find accommodation and move out of centres and the pressure to assimilate) and which had directly led to the situation these women and their children found themselves in, remained. Calwell's successor as Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, continued to actively pursue the placement of children saying that: 'Now that the mothers have been relieved of the responsibility of looking after their children they are free to engage in remunerative employment, in fact they are obliged to do so' (NAA, A434, 1949/3/24452).

A more permanent solution for migrant widows and unmarried mothers failing to manage under the pressures of the policies in place was the adoption of their children. Within wider Australian society of the period, adoption was generally perceived to be 'the ideal solution to the problem of ex-nuptial pregnancy' as it:

provided the "healthy" white child with a two-parent family and legitimacy, the birth mother with an opportunity to "get on with her life" and infertile couples with a child to care for and cherish (Standing Committee on Social Issues, 2000, p. 36).

Again, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from the available records how many migrant women might have gone down this path. While one social worker report states that 'very few are willing to even consider having the children adopted' (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969), others report, often quite matter of factly, that '[t]wo babies have been adopted' (NAA, A445, 276/3/1) or that 'the adoption for the newborn of an unmarried mother was finalised and the child was handed over to the Child Welfare Inspector . . . A further two unmarried mothers in the centre have requested assistance with the adoption of their expected babies' (NAA, A437, 1949/6/385).

Numbers were obviously sufficient that departmental instructions were issued to outline the legal requirements and procedures required for New Australian mothers who wished to have children adopted. In the first instance, social workers and accommodation centre directors were told that migrant women may 'make private arrangements' or that the 'Centre Social worker might help'. However, if the mother could not make private arrangements then:

the Department must be concerned. The Director must obtain a witnessed and signed statement from the mother to the effect that she fully understands the adoption process and that she desires the Director to make arrangements for the adoption of her baby (NAA, K403, W59/926 Part 1).

In this and other correspondence regarding the adoption of migrant children, one is struck by the impersonal nature and lack of consideration given to these women and their children. In one report, the plight of a recently arrived unmarried mother who gave birth to a child soon after her arrival at Bathurst Migrant Camp and had the child adopted is highlighted. Following the adoption, and as required under the work contract, this woman was placed in employment in a private home caring for three children. The social worker reported that after a short time she:

began to resent expending her love and energy on strange children when she had been forced to part with her own. Her employer felt it was not safe to leave the children in her care. She was being treated for insomnia and hives and a doctor recommended she not be employed in the care of children (NAA, A434, 1950/3/5084).

The woman was subsequently found work in a factory (NAA, A434, 1950/3/5084).

Conclusion

It is clear that the policies put in place for the management of the post-war mass influx of DPs were severely tested by the arrival of significant numbers of widowed and single women with dependent children. Their family status was, in general, incompatible with the requirement to serve out a 2 year work contract, their inability to work caused problems with movement through and out of the hostel system, and their inability to move into the community compromised the assimilation aims of the government of the day. Even as early as November 1950, T E Heyes, of the Department of Immigration, noted that 'Widows with children are amongst our greatest employment problems' and suggested that 'all future sailings should not accept widows with more than one child unless the children are of working age' (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969).

The establishment of the Social Welfare Section of the Department of Immigration and the deployment of social workers represented an acknowledgement of some of the issues being raised but did not really address the tragedy of the plight of the unintended victims of the policy failings, namely the children of single and unmarried or widowed migrants. The Department of Immigration records that have been used as the basis of the research for this paper do not tell us much of the long term fate of the children of women who transited through the migrant accommodation system and who were forced, by a combination of circumstances, to give them up in order to be able to undertake work. Some files certainly indicate that placement was temporary, whilst for others placement and adoption was permanent. Many of these children grew up, as one social

worker reports, in 'places where there are too many children for any one individual to receive the adequate personal attention every child needs' (NAA, A445, 276/3/1). Therefore, although their path to the wider child welfare system may have been different, their experiences of 'care' have undoubtedly cast similar long shadows as those who were part of the now notorious child migration schemes. It is important that these children of post-war refugees and migrants are recognised within the awareness and ongoing scholarship that has arisen from the inquiries into, and national apologies for, the treatment of children forced into adoption or institutional care, as, unlike some of these practices which are rooted in our history, the migration of refugee women and their children continues.¹² As Lenette (2013) highlights, over 80% of the world's estimated 15 million refugees are said to be women (many of them widowed) and children and yet as her recent work on Sudanese women in Queensland highlights:

the impact of widowhood on the lives of lone refugee women with children in a resettlement context does not receive a lot of attention . . . It is therefore important to consider the lived experiences of widows with children as a distinct set of circumstances that determine their resettlement process (p. 404).

Australia's refugee intake, does, and will continue to, contain these women and their children.

Endnotes

- 1 While the majority of widows and unmarried mothers arrived in Australia as dependants, there are also cases of DP women who, through marital breakdown, desertion, death or mental illness found themselves in the category of widowed after their arrival. Similarly, there are incidents of anti-nuptial births after arrival. There are many examples within the files including: a Yugoslavian-born DP and her three children who had arrived in 1949, remained in the Wacol Centre after the death of her husband, and was still at the centre in 1956; and a Ukrainian-born woman and her two children whose husband was admitted to a mental institution soon after arrival (NAA: J25, 1966/2798).
- 2 Child endowment, which had been introduced in 1941, provided for the payment of 5s per week for second and subsequent children under 16 years of age. The scheme was extended in 1950 to include the first child. See Howe and Swain, 1993.
- 3 The term New Australian was first coined by Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell in the late 1940s in an attempt to deter the use of the pejorative titles Balts and Reffos being applied to new arrivals. It also fitted into the wider rhetoric of the assimilationist policy of the day. The term New Australia soon took on its own derogatory implications.
- 4 See for example Neuman, 2004 and Persian, 2015.
- 5 The term 'Australian way of life' coined in the 1940s, came into regular use in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular. While never specifically defined, the term came to represent the idea of a quintessential Australian, a specific Australian spirit or character with certain ideals and values, who celebrated their links to mother England etc. For discussion on this term see White, 1981. For contemporary discussion see Stanner, 1953.
- 6 National apologies – Stolen Generations (2008), Forgotten Australians and former child migrants (2009), Forced adoptions (2013). Academic responses include but are not limited to the works arising out of the History of Adoption Project by Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain and Denise Cuthbert. For further information see: <https://www.google.com.au/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=history%20of%20adoption%20project>
- 7 Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants is an Australian Research Council Linkage funded project based at the University of Adelaide. For further information see: <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/history/hostel-stories/>
- 8 The 'White Australia Policy' is the colloquial term used for the Australian *Immigration Restriction Act (1901)*. The Act effectively controlled the entry of unacceptable, especially non-white, migrants into Australia through the use of a Dictation Test.
- 9 The phrase had first been used by Billy Hughes in 1937; however, its use is more commonly associated with the immediate post war period.
- 10 Egon Kunz (1988, pp. 46–47) outlines that in the first 16 months of the program there were seven male DPs to every two women and less than 4% of the total arrivals were children. The problem of the balances of the sexes among DPs was evident in Department of Immigration documents which noted that '[t]he addition of single workers . . . to a population that already has an excess of males over females does help solve immediate labour problems but unless comparable numbers of females of marriageable age . . . can be added to our population no contribution to population building can be made' (Quoted in Kune, 1989 p. 45).
- 11 Although these Department of Immigration files contain no further information about these children once they are placed, and therefore no direct evidence is available about their experiences, it is worth noting that at the time of writing some of these institutions are the subject of the ongoing Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sex Abuse.
- 12 See endnote 6 above.

References

- Aitken-Swan, J. (1962). *Widows in Australia: A survey of the economic and social condition of widows with dependent children*. Sydney: Council of Social Service of New South Wales.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives. (14 August 1948), p. 19.
- Curthoys, A. (1987). Children, women and men. In A. Curthoys, A. Martin, & T. Rowse (Eds.), *Australians from 1939* (pp. 309–327). Broadway, New South Wales: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon.
- Damoussi, J. (2001). *Living with the aftermath: Trauma, nostalgia and grief in post-war Australia*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Forgotten Australians - A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children (2004). Report of Senate Inquiry: Australia. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/index
- Howe, R., & Swain, S. (1993). Saving the child and punishing the mother: Single mothers and the state 1912–1942. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 17(37), 31–46.

- Kunek, S. (1989). Greek female migration in the post world war II period in Australia. *Australian Studies*, 2, 36–58.
- Kunz, E. F. (1988). *Displaced persons: Calwell's new Australians*. Sydney: Australian National University Press.
- Lenette, C. (2013). 'I am a widow, mother and refugee': Narratives of two refugee widows resettled in Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 27(3), 403–421.
- Macintyre, S. (2015). *Australia's boldest experiment: War and reconstruction in the 1940s*. Sydney: Newsouth.
- Markus, A. (1984). Labour and immigration 1946–9: The displaced persons program. *Labour History*, 47, 73–90.
- Markus, A., Jupp, J., & McDonald, P. (2009). *Australia's immigration revolution*. New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- Migrant Children Jam Welfare Homes. (1952, 25 January). *The Argus*, p. 5.
- Migrants "Selling" Children. (1951, 6 August). *The Advertiser*, p. 3.
- Migrants Rush Orphanages. (1951, 12 August). *The Sunday Herald*, p. 5.
- Murphy, J. (2000). *Imagining the fifties: Private sentiment and political culture in Menzies' Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- National Archives Australia, A434, 1949/3/24452, Placement of children of displaced persons who are widows, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/25969, Placement of displaced persons - widows with children - Policy, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/27104, Widows with dependent children at immigration centres - employment and accommodation, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/5084, Accommodation at Labour and National Service Hostels for single women, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A436, 1948/5/330, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council conditioning campaign conferences with press & radio representatives & preparation of statement for circulation to press & radio editors, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A437, 1949/6/385, Social Worker's Report, Uranquinty Centre, NSW, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section - social workers' reports - Benalla Centre (Victoria), Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A438, 1949/7/1510, Appointment of social workers to Department of Immigration, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A438, 1950/7/387, Conference on duties of social workers, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 140/5/6, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 200/1/5, Medical - Displaced Persons. Policy & procedure in regard to migrants & applicants, for landing permits, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 276/2/10, Social Welfare. Widows and unmarried mothers with dependent children, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/1, Senior social workers annual reports - all states, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports - New South Wales, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/4, Social workers annual reports - South Australia, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, A446, 1962/65241, Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Hostels and Centres Part 1, Canberra.
- National Archives Australia, D1917, D24/46 Part 2, Decentralisation - migrant hostels Part 2, Adelaide.
- National Archives Australia, D400, SA1959/3783, Assimilation - Social Welfare Officers, Adelaide.
- National Archives Australia, J25, 1966/2798, Social welfare - migrant accommodation - problem cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels], Brisbane.
- National Archives Australia, K403, W59/926 Part 1, [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100, Perth.
- National Archives Australia, MP239/7, 573/6/1, Displaced persons - financial arrangements - policy and procedure - covering advances, fares, travel warrants and excess baggage, Melbourne.
- Neumann, K. (2004). *Refuge Australia: Australia's humanitarian record*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Penglase, J. (2007). *Orphans of the living: Growing up in 'care' in twentieth-century Australia*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press.
- Persian, J. (2015). 'Chifley liked them blond': DP immigrants for Australia. *History Australia*, 12(2), 80–101.
- Quartly, M., Swain, S., & Cuthbert, D. (2013). *The market in babies: Stories of Australian adoption*. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing.
- Report of Senate Inquiry Australia. (2001). *Lost innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/child_migrat/report/index.
- Standing Committee on Social Issues. (2000). *Releasing the past: Adoption practices, 1950–1998: final report*. Sydney. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/5540/Report.PDF>
- Stanner, W. E. H. (1953). The Australian way of life. In W. V. Aughterson (Ed.), *Taking stock: Aspects of mid-century life in Australia* (pp. 3–14). Melbourne: F W Cheshire.
- White, R. (1981). *Inventing Australia: Images and identity 1688–1980*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Work and Accommodation Wanted for Migrants. (1950, 21 July), *The Riverine Grazier*, p. 1.

Chapter 12 Article 7: Food and the challenge to identity for post-war refugee women in Australia

The following article, accepted for publication in *History of the Family*, highlights how the policy of assimilation, through the denial of culturally appropriate food and its subsequent delivery, impacted upon wives and mothers stripping them of their identity as carers and cultural gatekeepers.

Statement of Authorship

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title of Paper | Food and the challenge to identity for post-war refugee women in Australia |
| Publication Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Published <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted for Publication <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished and Unsubmitted work written in manuscript style |
| Publication Details | Accepted for publication in History of the family on 29/03/2017 and is currently in production |

Principal Author

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Name of Principal Author (Candidate) | Karen Agutter | |
| Contribution to the Paper | Undertook original research on the place of food within the hostel system, including archival research and interviews of ex hostel residents of the period. Wrote the original draft paper | |
| Overall percentage (%) | 70% | |
| Certification: | This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper. | |
| Signature | | Date 8-5-17 |

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

- i. the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
- ii. permission is granted for the candidate to include the publication in the thesis; and
- iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| Name of Co-Author | Rachel Ankeny | |
| Contribution to the Paper | Reviewed and added to the original draft, contributed towards historiography of topic and acted as corresponding author. Also participated in some of the interviews | |
| Signature | | Date 8/5/17 |



Food and the challenge to identity for post-war refugee women in Australia

Karen Agutter  and Rachel A. Ankeny 

Department of History, School of Humanities, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

In many societies, feeding one's family in traditional and culturally appropriate ways is an essential part of being a mother and a wife. For migrants, food can play an important role in the maintenance of tradition, culture, and identity. This paper uses archival evidence, media coverage, memoirs, and oral histories to explore how policies associated with food in migrant hostels impacted on, and interfered with, the central role of food in the commensal circle of the family, and in the identification of migrant women as wives, mothers, and cultural gatekeepers. We identify three main factors that contributed to this negative cultural impact: the preparation of quintessentially 'Australian' menus that were alien to most of the population; communal dining arrangements which disrupted the basic social activity of commensality; and the fact that there was no need for women to prepare food for their families, and no opportunity to do so since having private cooking facilities was illegal. The impact of these eating/dining experiences on women and their families was obviously profound: even today, the topic of food and enforced communal dining is among the first and most vivid of memories, typically negative, reported by those who transitioned through the hostels.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 October 2016
Accepted 29 March 2017

KEYWORDS

Displaced persons (DPs); commensality; foodways; assimilation; migrant hostels

We had left behind more than a country when we got off the boat ... and went to live in that migrant hostel – we'd left behind an entire culture. And in daily life that culture was expressed in the preparation and eating of food. (Manfredi & Newton, 1993, p. 11)

1. Introduction

Janowski (2012a) contends that food and foodways should be thought of as 'social fuel' (p. 183): what we eat and who we choose to include within and exclude from our commensal circles 'explicitly and implicitly make statements about identity and belonging'.¹ In the lives of refugees and migrants, the significance of food as 'social fuel' is arguably even more important since

[m]emories about food are mobilized and manipulated, drawn on and themselves fed, in an active process which does not just make a statement about affiliation to individual people and

groups but is part of an active and sometimes highly aspirational process of moving into new social, class and ethnic spaces. Food provides a sensuous and a social space for drawing on the past to construct the present and imagine the future. (Janowski, 2012a, p. 183)

So what happens when food choice is limited or dictated, and particular forms of commensality forced? For migrant women looking to reconstruct their lives in Australia during the waves of migration that began after World War Two and which continued through the 1980s, food and commensality were important keys to their senses of identity. Years of hostility and displacement had already played a large part in the erosion of their traditional roles within the family as the gatekeepers of culture and tradition, and as caregivers within the prevalent father-breadwinner/mother-carer model of the time. However, as we will illustrate, this erosion was further compounded on arrival in Australia where the commensal and social roles of food were strictly controlled by a system of government policies focused on assimilation of new arrivals.

Housed in different forms of large migrant accommodation centres (referred to collectively in this paper as 'hostels'), these families had little to no control over what they ate, when they ate, and with whom. Prohibited from cooking for themselves and their families, these women were forced to abide by set mealtimes in institutional-style cafeterias, often situated in cavernous ex-army Nissen huts. Furthermore, the food available to them was traditional Australian fare with little or no consideration of ethnic or cultural requirements or preferences. Unlike the institutional dining rooms studied by Forero, Ellis, Metcalfe, and Brown (2009), these dining rooms did not provide a 'space for creating, re-creating, transforming and reproducing values associated with food provision and consumption' (p. 226). Rather, they became contested spaces for refugees, particularly displaced persons (DPs) who arrived from Europe, and especially women and their families, as new arrivals were subjected to the rules and assimilationist objectives of the host society. Food became an extremely common point of complaint that remains central to many of these migrants' negative memories of their hostel experiences today.

This paper explores the experiences of migrant women housed in migrant hostels through the lens of food and commensality using archival evidence, memoirs, and oral histories where available. After situating the lives of these women and their families within the context of the Australian post-World War Two mass migration scheme, we examine how the policies and rules in the migrant hostels, the familial separation imposed by work contracts, and the expectation of assimilation impacted on, and interfered with, the central role of food in the commensal circle of the family, and in the identification of these women as wives, mothers, and cultural gatekeepers. Finally, although later arrivals, particularly British and Italian migrants, found diverse means of fighting back against these norms (see Hassam, 2009; Postiglione, 2010), for the early arrivals there were limited avenues for overt protest in the hostels. We provide evidence of some efforts to resist, but also consider how food created divisions between the new arrivals and the host society as these refugees fought to maintain continuity in their foodways as a marker of enduring culture and identity in their new homeland.

A point of clarification on our terminology is required at the outset. Despite Kunz's early, groundbreaking work identifying more than 20 different nationalities among the DPs that arrived in Australia (Kunz, 1988, p. 43), scholars often have lumped together various groups of post-war refugees under homogenous labels, rather than as people with separate ethnicities, political beliefs, histories, and cultures. Martin (1965) considers this issue from the

point of view of the DPs that she interviewed, who stated that they objected most to the pressure to become assimilated and disliked being lumped together as an homogenous group (for instance as 'Balts' or 'New Australians').² Relatedly Damousi (2013) outlines how the Good Neighbour Councils³ in their work to assimilate new arrivals generally treated all New Australians collectively, as 'an homogenous, undifferentiated group' (p. 509). We are well aware of these debates and the problematic issues associated with this terminology, but because of the bureaucratic tendencies which dominate in the archival records (Persian, 2012), we are often unable to access detailed information about these refugees in terms of their ethnicities or countries of origin, and hence refer to them as DPs, refugees, or migrants throughout the paper unless more specific information is available.

2. Literature review

Atkins and Bowler (2001) note that food traditions 'are among the most deeply ingrained forms of human behaviour' (p. 296). Studying how food is prepared and consumed not only allows deep insights into various foodways, but also illuminates the maintenance and adaptation of ethnic and cultural traditions. In recent decades, scholarship documenting the emergence of migrant foodways in new contexts has proliferated (e.g. Cinotto, 2001; Diner, 2002; Gabaccia, 1998), with particular focus on how food habits evolve, fuse, and become reinvented in the migrants' new locales due to various influences such as the availability of different ingredients and the impacts of local foodways. Scholarship also has burgeoned around the performance of national identity via particular dishes or food practices (to name just a few, see Avieli, 2005; Chou, 2015; Cwiertka, 2006; Raviv, 2015).

The notion of women as the gatekeepers for the maintenance of culture and identity is not new. Although women's control over food has varied across time, class, ethnicity, and place (McIntosh & Zey, 2005, p. 146), recent studies show that women continue to be the main decision-makers regarding food selection and provision for the family. The fact that the primary responsibility for family foodways lies with women, particularly wives and mothers, may be interpreted as an ongoing burden and indeed a means of gender oppression; however, as D'Sylva and Beagan (2011) explain, 'the gendered meanings of foodwork are complicated when race, diaspora and ethnic identity are also taken into account' (p. 279). Furthermore, as they demonstrate,

gendered roles in foodwork may have multiple, complex and even contradictory meanings ... [f]or racially marginalized, transnational and diasporic groups [so that foodwork] may develop into a source of power ... food skills may become currency, culinary capital, a resource in the construction and maintenance of gendered ethnic identities. (p. 287)

The often contradictory relationship that migrant women have with foodwork is also highlighted in Avakian's (2005) study of Armenian-Americans which recognised both the potential for oppression as well as the creation of authority and control, so that the cooking of Armenian food for these women was a symbol of caring and love even as they remained 'mindful of the dangers inherent in an activity so closely connected to women's subservience' (p. 278). Similarly, D'Sylva and Beagan (2011) argue that the 'context of women's lives is critical for determining how gendered roles in foodwork are understood' (p. 287); as indicated above this is particularly true of migrant women, many of whom see food provisioning as a practice 'through which womanhood is constructed, and ... [as] a means of communicating love and respect for family members' (Vallianatos & Raine, 2008, p. 361).

A further key theme in recent food studies scholarship has been the importance of commensality, which literally means 'eating at the same table'. Fischler (2011, p. 529) argues that commensality is a critical expression of human sociality, particularly because eating together as a form of hospitality is a fundamental social activity in all cultures. Commensality is an essential part of special occasions such as holiday or life-stage celebrations and ritual practices, especially as these often bring together people who do not typically eat together (for a typology of types of commensality, see Grignon, 2001). This type of commensality, particularly in the context of feasts in both Western and non-Western societies, has been the primary focus in food studies until recently, especially in relation to taboos and the use of food to establish boundaries (Douglas, 1966).

Commensality also is an important everyday activity, typically bringing together a relatively stable core of people, and thus it is rich with social and political meanings. This type of commensality has become increasingly studied and recognised in recent scholarship (e.g. see Julier, 2013; Kerner, Chou, & Warmind, 2015), following calls to 'take commensality seriously' (Hirschman, 1996, p. 533). Sobal, Bove, and Rauschenbach (2002, p. 378) argue that who we share our food with, both within the immediacy of the family and in wider social and cultural circles, reinforces and contributes to our places within our social systems (see also Bourdieu, 1984), while Kerner and Chou (2015) note that everyday commensality, especially in families, establishes habits and trust, and minimalises conflicts of daily life. More generally, Fiddes (1991) argues that food choice 'reflects our thought, including choices of people with whom we wish to identify' (p. 33). However Hirschman (1996) notes that commensality is not always positive, since '[t]he social, political, and cultural consequences of the common meal are extraordinarily varied; moreover, their outcome can turn out to be positive or negative' (p. 547).

It is evident then that the study of food has expanded over recent decades and scholars across disciplines have increasingly looked through the lens of foodways to examine society and social constructs. Within migration studies the study of migrant foodways has, as shown above, primarily been limited to examining our understanding of identity transplantation and maintenance and the role of women as the cultural gatekeepers. Much less attention has been paid to the role of foodways following displacement or to cases where cultural food practices are actively undermined or become eroded, and the resulting social and cultural impacts.

Janowski's (2012b) study of Polish women displaced by war provides an important exploration of the role food played for these women in maintaining their own 'Polishness' and nurturing it in the lives of their children. Although these women were eventually housed in DP camps in Africa, they were free to cook their own food for their families, unlike the women in our study. Nevertheless, as Janowski argues, the role of foodways in the context of displacement 'extends our understanding of the role of food in migration ... [and] suggests rich possibilities for further exploration' (pp. 346–347). The significance of studies which extend beyond the traditional migration narrative and the ethnic enclave is also highlighted by Rowe (2012) in her examination of the role of assimilation and the pressures and expectations to participate in American food rituals that were placed upon migrants from the Middle East to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. Again the key difference between these Lebanese migrants and the DPs which form the basis of this study was their ability, despite the pressures of assimilation, to maintain their own traditional foodways within the family.

Finally, important comparisons can be drawn between the migrant hostels in post-war Australia and Dusselier's (2002) study of the Japanese interned in American camps during World War Two, where the requirement of communal eating was initially blamed for the breakdown of family groups and the 'dissolution of traditional family life' (p. 155). However, collective resistance and protest ultimately resulted in changes to the food available, including the ability in some camps to grow, purchase, and cook culturally specific food, or for mothers to bring food from communal dining halls back to their families. Of particular importance is Dusselier's argument that the experiences of the Japanese-Americans

may aid us in understanding the meaning attached to food, both in the context of cultural resistance and appropriation. For marginalized and displaced populations, this may be especially relevant, as efforts to conform with dominant cultures are often interpreted in terms of food choices and resistance to assimilation is expressed by retaining food traditions from geographically distant 'homelands.' (pp. 157–158)

3. Methodology

The research for this paper was undertaken as part of a much broader study looking at the lived experience of migrants (including refugees) who passed through government-provided migrant accommodation in Australia, with a specific focus on South Australia, between 1947 and the early 1990s. In the course of this study we received in excess of 600 expressions of interest and conducted over 90 oral interviews with former migrant hostel residents.³

Recruitment for oral history interviews began with a registration of interest form which asked migrants/participants to provide basic information on their background prior to migration, who they migrated with (i.e. familial relationships), and their time spent in the accommodation centre(s) (many migrants passed through more than one hostel). The questions relating to their experiences of the hostels included discussion about food provision and hostel facilities, as well as open-ended enquiries about their 'strongest memories', the significance of the time spent in the hostel(s), and the influences that the hostel(s) had on their settlement in Australia. Given the breadth of the project, selection of potential interviewees was conducted with a view to representing the diverse countries of origin (over 30), the broad timeframe of hostel operations, the age ranges of migrants at their time of arrival, their reasons for migration, and the particular hostels in which they resided.⁴ Consequently the oral histories associated with the Hostel Stories project cover a diverse range of ages and ethnicities. They represent male and female adults, and child/youth migrants as well as a range of familial relationships especially when partners, or parents and children both were interviewed.

Although the migrant voice is important to the reconstruction of the migrant experience within these hostels, as scholars of oral testimony attest, these sources may be 'artificial, variable, and partial' (Portelli, 2006, p. 46) and heavily influenced by memories, many of which have been shared and incorporated with the memory of events outside the actual experience being examined (see for example Darian-Smith & Hamilton, 1994). Furthermore, given the period under consideration for this paper, many of those who arrived as migrants and refugees are now deceased and hence the sample size is necessarily quite small. Other sources such as memoirs can provide important ancillary access to migrant experiences so long as the usual precautions are taken in interpretation, but again, relevant memoirs in this period are relatively scarce.⁵ Therefore this paper also explores the official records as captured in government archival papers.

Australian authorities maintained extensive records of their activities especially in regard to migration and the operation of the migrant hostels. These records, written and pictorial, along with contemporary newspaper accounts, add further important information, albeit through the lens of the host nation and the authority of the time, about the ways in which food was prepared, served, and received within the hostels.

4. Post-World War Two Australia

To situate the experiences of the early DP arrivals into Australia and also the behaviours of the authorities, it is first important to understand the context of the mass immigration programme in Australia. In the years following World War Two, Australia sought to increase its population and build its economic and industrial base. For the first time in the nation's relatively short history, Australian officials looked beyond the traditional (and preferred) British migrants of the past not only by accepting European refugees, but also by negotiating assisted passage arrangements with countries not previously welcomed or seen in Australian immigration. The first large number of non-British migrants to arrive, and the primary focus of this paper, comprised over 170,000 displaced persons (DPs) from Europe who came to Australia under an agreement with the International Refugee Organization.

These refugees arrived in an Australia that was deeply committed to maintaining the so-called 'Australian way of life' through the rapid assimilation of all new arrivals.⁶ A key component of assimilation was the education of new arrivals in the English language and Australian culture, including (by extension) an acceptance of Australian foodways. Their arrival also coincided with an acute housing shortage. So in order to meet their accommodation needs, and prevent competition in the housing market, especially with Australian returned servicemen and their families, a number of Reception and Training Centres were established. These centres, as their name suggests, were designed to receive new arrivals and 'train' them in the basics of the Australian life. They were designed as temporary mass accommodation centres and, more often than not, were situated in ex-army and air force bases. Alongside these Reception and Training Centres, a complex system of migrant accommodation evolved including Workers Hostels to house male breadwinners close to their places of employment, and Holding Centres which were intended to house the workers' dependants as they waited for their husbands and fathers to complete their work contracts or to find alternative accommodation for their families. A fourth level of accommodation, the migrant hostel, was also established to house migrants, particularly family groups arriving via the assisted passage scheme; the term 'hostel' is often used generically to refer to all of these types of accommodation.

As part of Australia's agreement with the International Refugee Organization, single men and women, widows and unmarried mothers, and male breadwinners from family groups were required to complete a two-year work contract. During this period, workers were placed in employment by the Department of Labour and National Service. The work was often menial, with men being sent to labouring and manufacturing positions and women to domestic service or ancillary positions in hospitals and tuberculosis sanatoriums. For the dependent wives and children who were housed in holding centres, this situation often resulted in prolonged periods of separation for members of family groups (Agutter, 2013), which contributed to the dismantling of traditional family hierarchies in part through disruption of food habits and patterns of commensality.

Although the various types of hostels had different roles within the post-war mass migration system, they all had common characteristics. After the first seven days, all refugees and assisted migrants were charged rent, with a fixed fee for adults and a sliding scale for children depending on age. Accommodation was very basic as a constraint of cost, but also out of fear of appearing to provide advantages to new arrivals over members of the local community particularly at a time of acute housing shortage. In addition, hostels were deliberately designed to provide short-term housing as it was felt that too much comfort would encourage long stays (National Archives Australia [NAA], [K279, 1948/979 Part 1](#)). All levels of accommodation worked on a system of communal living with shared bathrooms, toilets, and laundries as well as central kitchens and large dining rooms where meals were served; board was included in the rent, with no option for opting out of eating within the hostel. Officially, private cooking for one's family was not allowed and therefore there were no provisions for it.⁷

Despite the government's aim that these hostels would provide temporary housing, in reality lengths of stay varied considerably, with some families staying for months and even years, due to a number of factors but often as a consequence of the limitations of the work contracts. The required work contract and attendant low-paid, menial positions meant that migrants had little money available after paying the hostel rent to save towards renting or purchasing housing in the wider community, particularly given the lack of affordable accommodation available due to the housing shortage and the subsequent high cost of home rental or purchase. Therefore, many displaced mothers and their children were forced to spend long periods of time separated from their respective husbands and fathers, living in communal facilities, where they had little or no control over the food they ate, how and when they ate it, or with whom they ate.

5. What did new arrivals experience in the hostels?

Given the multitude of issues associated with moving to and living in a strange land, it is notable that some of the most enduring memories for migrants who transitioned through the government accommodation system revolve around food. In oral histories as well as memoirs, when asked what they remember about their time spent in a hostel, the alien nature of the food and the problematic nature of the communal dining experience are among the most frequently noted themes by DPs from a range of cultural backgrounds, locales, and histories.

When the first DPs arrived in December 1947, Australian authorities were proud of being able to feed hot, nutritious meals to migrants within an hour of their arrival at a hostel, even if it was late at night (Pennay, 2012, p. 50). In the eyes of Australian authorities and hostel staff, this ability to provide food was a sign of the hospitality of the host nation, a warm welcome. As Pennay (2012, p. 49) notes, food is often viewed differently by the recipient and the provider, a tendency that is well recognised in food studies scholarship. For many new arrivals, although the food was welcome and certainly plentiful, especially compared to what was typically available during and after the war in Europe, it did not conform to their familiar food habits and had an unappealing appearance, texture, and smell.

Australian authorities and hostel staff took the provision of food seriously and used the nascent science of nutrition, building on the experiences of soldiers during wartime and in consultation with dieticians, to ensure that all new arrivals received the calories and

nourishment required, including extra milk and fruit for children and pregnant women, and higher fat content for recent arrivals from war-torn Europe who had nutritional deficiencies. Catering manuals of the period state that foods of high nutritional value 'should be served as often as possible' and that the manager should do all that is possible to 'popularise' these dishes (NAA, MP414/1, WOS).

However, the food itself was typical of the Australian diet of the time which Duruz (1999, p. 232) describes as bleak and plain, largely as a consequence of the decades of dominance of British immigration until the post-war period. Furthermore, as Blackburn (2012) notes, food in the wider Australian community was 'eaten as mechanically and often reluctantly as it was made' (p. 210). By contrast, in many European countries from which DPs originated, food traditionally was central to family life, often serving as a focal point for socialisation and various cultural traditions. Outside family gatherings for traditional Sunday roast and special events such as Christmas, food in Australia in the late 1940s and early 1950s often was predominantly viewed as fuel eaten for its nutritive value alone. Even if this description is somewhat of a caricature, food certainly was treated in this manner within migrant accommodation settings.

Bland, British/Australian fare is the basis of the surviving menus and catering manuals, with meals centring around large quantities of meat. Breakfast included cereals such as Wheaties and porridge, as well as a hot dish that varied each day of the week, such as fried eggs and bacon, Fritz (a cold, pressed meat made mainly of pork, similar to American bologna) in batter, tinned spaghetti, kidneys, or meat rissoles with potatoes.⁸ White bread, fresh or toasted, was served with butter and jam. Breakfast, like all other meals, was accompanied by tea; coffee was also available at this meal, though in its Australian form, namely made of chicory essence. Lunches often started with soup followed by meat and vegetables, and bread and butter and jam were always available. Soup was also offered at the evening meal followed by meat; depending on the day, the meat may have been roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, Irish stew, boiled or roast mutton, brawn, mock chicken cutlets, Lancashire hotpot, or crumbed sausages. This heavily meat-oriented meal was accompanied by vegetables such as potato, pumpkin, cabbage, sprouts, and cauliflower cheese (NAA, D1917, D19/49). As was the case in the wider Australian community, dessert was traditionally served as part of the evening meal (Duruz, 1999, p. 243) and generally included customary English-style 'puddings' such as rice pudding, golden syrup dumplings, and apple charlotte (see for example NAA, D1917, D19/49).

Economy of scale, hygienic conditions, and ease of storage, preparation, cooking, and service were all consistent priorities for those charged with operating the hostel kitchens. Although seconds were often available, all meals were strictly apportioned. For instance a serve of soup was 8 ounces (225 grams), meat weighed in at between 3 and 5 ounces depending on the cut, and vegetables at 7 ounces; at some times, portions were limited, for example to two slices of bread per person. In addition, the catering managers felt that the use of weekly rotational menus increased efficiency. However for migrants, this regularity and predictability added to the institutionalisation of the food experience; as one migrant commented: 'There was always plenty to eat, but ... it got boring. You only had to look at your plate to know what day of the week it was' (quoted in Pennay, 2007, p. 1).

Menus were also heavily influenced by cost, food availability due to season or other contingencies, and the extent of plate waste, which was closely monitored (NAA, MP414/1, WOS). When catering for such large numbers, overall cost was very important and was

continuously documented. Archival documents indicate that it cost 2 shillings and 9 pence a day to feed each migrant or approximately £360,000 to operate the catering service for the year at the hostel at Bonegilla (Victoria) in 1950, and this cost had to be multiplied across the increasing number of centres operated by the government around the country (NAA, [A434, 1949/3/25374](#)).

In the hostel system, in addition to the cost of food, kitchens and dining rooms employed the largest number of staff as compared to other types of roles within the accommodation. However, directors frequently complained that good and qualified staff were difficult to recruit and to keep, as wages were much higher outside the hostels (NAA, [A445, 220/14/25](#)). As a consequence, refugee and migrant staff were increasingly employed, particularly as kitchenhands. The employment of recent migrants did result in some minor changes to the food served to hostel residents; however, cost, availability, and most importantly assimilationist policy generally outweighed cultural preferences until the 1970s and 1980s.⁹

The environment in which food was served in the hostels added to migrants' negative perceptions. The dining room at a typical hostel was large, noisy, and institutional in nature. In some hostels, family groups could sit at individual tables (and certainly more of these options were made available as the system evolved during the 1950s and beyond, see [Figure 1](#), taken in 1957). However, in most early hostels in which the post-war refugees resided, the tables were often long and communal so that several families were seated randomly together. No matter what the arrangement of the furniture, the atmosphere was that of an institution, far removed from the intimacy and control of a typical family meal.



Figure 1. Scheyville Centre Dining Room (NAA, [A12111, 1/1957/22/6](#)).



Figure 2. Nelson's Bay Hostel circa 1951 (NAA, C5102, CU1427/3).

Mealtimes were regulated and strictly enforced: breakfast was served between 6 and 8 am, lunch between 12 noon and 1 pm, and dinner between 4.45 and 6.15 pm. Some leeway was allowed at weekends, with breakfast extended to 8.45 (NAA, A437, 1950/6/173). Food was served cafeteria style, with residents queuing to be served from the bains-marie which were employed to keep food warm (see Figure 2). Residents were served so as to avoid any injuries from hot substances or food, particularly to children, and to control portions and waste, as '[t]his is the point at which most of the profits or losses are made' (NAA, MP414/1, WOS).

For instance at Bonegilla, the first and largest of the Reception and Training Centres, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were eight kitchens operating with 146 kitchen staff to cater for over 7700 migrants within the hostel itself, with an additional 1600 living in tents at peak times (Pennay, 2012, pp. 49 and 52). Although other hostels may have been slightly smaller, catering for hundreds rather than thousands, the sheer scale of providing for large numbers contributed to the sterile, institutional nature of the food in both delivery and taste. The operation of kitchens and dining rooms was hierarchical, with a catering manager, a chef, a number of cooks, kitchenhands, dining room attendants, and other ancillary staff such as storemen. Staff instruction manuals indicate that cleanliness and efficiency of service were important and demanded that food was 'cleanly and quickly served and ... that the Dining Room [wa]s kept clean, and all dirty utensils quickly cleaned away' (NAA, MP414/1, WOS).

In summary, from the Australian perspective, the food was typical of that offered in the wider community. The meals served, although heavily influenced by the requirements of economy and efficiency, were intended to be nutritious and plentiful, and considerable

attention was paid to these aspects of the catering. Similarly, the dining experience itself was a consequence of the mass nature of the migration programme, the sheer numbers of residents, and the wider objectives of temporary accommodation in a cost-effective, assimilationist manner. From the refugees' perspectives, however, this institutionalisation of the family mealtime was highly problematic. Set mealtimes, mass-produced, unfamiliar, and unappetising food, and large noisy dining halls did not allow families to use meals to maintain cultural or other traditions, or for the socialisation of children or other functions associated with communality.

6. Migrant experiences through the lens of food

It is clear that many of the participants in our research found the hostel food highly problematic. For example, one respondent originally from Austria noted that '... the lunch was too much mutton ... I don't think they cooked it the right way either, I wasn't impressed with it ...' (WH 19/6/13).¹⁰ More pointedly, Asta, a refugee from Lithuania stated that,

At Bathurst it was terrible and they probably thought all these hungry people coming from Europe, you know ... I think we had mutton for breakfast, lunch and dinner, you know, yeah. The food was terrible at Bathurst, yes, I didn't like it there. (AL 26/2/15)

And some, such as this female DP, report even worse things than the food not being to their taste:

And food, they think we don't know nothing, he bring like lambs or so, still with poo in, I found. When you eat, you can find manure in there. So dirty, so everything dirty ... nobody eat[s] because [we] can't eat this food. (JK 26/2/15)

In some hostels, unrest resulted from the food: as a newspaper report noted in 1952, police were called to the Maribyrnong migrant camp in Victoria when a report was received that Italians were rioting in the dining hall:

Police were told that two Italian migrants threw their trays of food on the dining-room floor, smashing plates and scattering cutlery. They complained loudly that the food was not palatable to them ... Camp menus include some Continental foods but officials say that it is impossible to cater for all tastes. ('Stir in Camp over Food for Migrants', 1952)

So if, as Janowski (2012a, p. 175) argues, our understanding of migration can be deepened by examining events through the lens of food, what can be learnt from considering the tensions associated with food and commensality in post-war migration hostels as outlined in the previous section, particularly for refugee mothers? Suppose that for the sake of argument we accept that the food provided, while bland, alien, and even sometimes unpalatable, was typically plentiful and fulfilled individual biological needs within the parameters of nutritional understandings of the day, we nevertheless contend that the frequency and intensity of migrants' recollections about the food indicate that what was provided failed to meet other fundamental needs beyond hunger and nutrition (Atkins & Bowler, 2001, p. 296), and these needs related to maintaining the solidarity of the family, which had already been disrupted by war, displacement, and migration.

For many post-war refugees, migration seems to have created a heightened sense of the importance of food habits and traditions, making them even more central to the maintenance of family solidarity especially when coupled with the separations faced by families due to men being on two-year work contracts often in distant locations, and the housing of women and children in separate hostels during these contracts. For those challenged by the

trauma and uncertainty of migration, food had the potential to provide a 'framework of memory', mediating between past and present and bringing comfort to refugees (Raman, 2011, p. 166). However, it also had the potential to create divisions, particularly between migrants and the host society (Janowski, 2012a, p. 175).

Australian foodways were forced upon new arrivals with little or no consideration in the early years of the mass migration scheme of cultural or ethnic requirements. As Kershen (2002) notes '[a]ll too often the receiving society has a simplistic and superficial interpretation of food and identity' (p. 7). Certainly Australia in the late 1940s and early 1950s was particularly naïve about, if not ignorant of, different cultural requirements and food habits, while simultaneously emphasising nutritional needs as primary. This ignorance, however, was compounded by the Australian demand for cultural assimilation, namely the belief that all new arrivals would adopt the host nation's ways, including with regard to foodways. As Haebich (2008) argues, the food in the hostels was a 'message of assimilation' (p. 171). The idea of food as an assimilationist device is supported by a comment by a Department of Immigration official who, responding to a suggestion that New Australians might be introducing their food habits into Australia, stated: 'That's not the idea at all ... What we want is for these migrants to become absorbed into the Australian community, not to bring their own habits with them' ('New Australians Pep Up Our Standard "Roast, Two Veggies"', 1950).

It is clear that Australian authorities used food as a political tool to aid assimilation through their decisions about the foods to be served and the manner in which they were provided. Even the environment that was associated with eating in the hostels had assimilationist overtones: consider the fact that the national anthem, 'Advance Australia Fair', was used to signal to residents that it was time to come to breakfast (Morris, 2001, p. 73). Furthermore, migrant children of school age quickly realised that Australian-style foods provided in hostel-prepared lunches helped them to 'negotiate group boundaries in peer interaction' (Amigo, 2012, p. 69) and in turn contributed to their assimilation.

However, migrants incurred blame when problems occurred with respect to food practices: for instance following deaths of numerous infants due to malnutrition shortly after their arrival in Australia from Europe, a nutritionist's report on the Nutritive Value of Rations (July 1949) at the Bonegilla and Uranquinty hostels (both in New South Wales) rated food as adequate on the migrant ships on which they were transported. In addition, the rations at the hostels were described as of

excellent quality and there was some evidence that they were more than adequate in amount ... [however] there was evidence at both camps that food was often taken from the mess huts to be consumed in the living quarters. This practice has disadvantages related to aspects of prevention of disease, nutritive values and food economy. (NAA, A1658, 556/3/10)

During this time period, providing for the family's food needs and the maintenance of the familial commensal circle were essential elements of a woman's role of caring through food, as she sought to meet her family's social, emotional, and cultural needs. In Europe, food would have been collected in various ways, by purchasing in urban locations and growth, harvesting, and/or barter in more rural locales, and these processes along with the preparation and serving of food would have been typically delegated to the mother within a family. Thus food-related care was at the core of the refugee mother's identity within the family.

A woman's role in feeding the family traditionally involved not just economics and supply but also judgments about the food needs of individual family members and providing the

best food available. In addition to deciding which foods were most suitable nutritiously and culturally, the task of shopping in itself is claimed by some to be an expression of the woman's identity (Johnson, Sharkey, Dean, McIntosh, & Kubena, 2011, p. 221) as well as often providing an outlet for contact with others (particularly other women) for many who may have had few other options for social interaction. The fact that the hostels did not have facilities for cooking and hence there was no need for women to shop for food for their families thus had wider implications in regard to family budgeting and social interactions (Johnson et al., 2011, p. 221), both with children and with other women.

Equally the preparation of food and the act of cooking have much wider significance than making food edible and palatable. The act of cooking is, for many women, more than the drudgery often attributed to it, representing an expression of love and affection, particularly for family members (Charles & Kerr, 1988, p. 64), as well as an important aspect of their sense of identity within the family. Furthermore, cooking can also be about teaching and sharing specific memories and cultural values with younger generations (DeVault, 1991, pp. 79–80).

The decisions that women typically make vary according to the meal in question. As Charles and Kerr (1988, p. 21) explain, different meals carry different levels of significance: the main meal is when the family traditionally eats together and therefore this meal provides the 'cement of family life' (James, Curtis, & Ellis, 2009, p. 39). Similarly, significant cultural and social occasions celebrated around food have implications across wider commensal circles of extended family or close friends from within the community. Therefore, the food chosen and prepared expresses not only the structure of the household itself but also the social relationships both within the home, and also outside it in relation to a larger cultural group (DeVault, 1991, p. 44).

For displaced women residing in hostels in the post-war period, the traditional roles and identities of wives and mothers, as the gatekeepers who decided which foods were suitable for the family and the occasion (Atkins & Bowler, 2001, p. 312), were almost completely undermined upon arrival in Australia (and may well have already been threatened during the war and time spent in DP camps and similar in war-torn Europe). In the hostel setting, these women had no control over the selection and preparation of food for their families, beyond perhaps being able to choose between one dessert and another at dinner time. In most hostels, women could not even serve their children, as food was doled out by kitchen workers.

Stowers (2012, p. 384) claims that the domestic kitchen was traditionally a female-gendered space where the preparation and provision of food for the family was representative of love and motherhood or it was seen as a demonstration of affection (see also Charles & Kerr, 1988, p. 64). In contrast, the kitchen within the migrant hostel was a commercial enterprise. As outlined above, massive quantities of food were prepared by paid staff within economic and logistical constraints, with a strong focus on maximising efficiency and reducing waste, and hence any association with love or affection was eliminated in this highly institutionalised setting. Thus families were forced to conform to food practices that were neither familiar nor meaningful (Punch, McIntosh, & Emond, 2009, p. 154), which in turn had considerable implications for identity (Messer, 2007).

Finally, eating together or commensality is a key part of the ongoing, day-to-day construction of the family unit, as DeVault (1991, p. 39) argues. The rigidity of fixed mealtimes (which was maintained despite complaints) made it difficult for mothers with young babies to time family meals according to the set schedule (Morris, 2001, p. 75). This issue, together

with the provisions in some hostels for children to be fed first or separately from adults, resulted in many families not eating together as commensal units (NAA, A445, 276/1/15), and clearly would have undermined family cohesion. Mealtimes traditionally provide time for families to talk and for parents, especially mothers, to educate children in a variety of ways. The mother's role in the teaching and disciplining of children around food and the table is multifaceted and as well as teaching children about nutrition, culture, and family history associated with food, mealtimes provide a setting in which children can be taught how to behave. As Bell and Gill (1997) note:

Table manners such as how to use the correct cutlery, not to speak when you have a mouth full, not to eat noisily and to keep 'all uncooked joints' (i.e. elbows) off the table are all subtle ways of teaching children to manage their bodies. (p. 64)

The hostel setting typically did not provide opportunities for these sorts of interactions or relationships, not in the least part because fathers were often absent and so the family unit was already partially eroded. In addition, our oral histories reveal that some mothers were concerned about the contact with other families and their children that tended to occur in the hostel dining room as they claimed their own children were influenced by the bad habits and behaviours of other children, particularly those of different ethnic backgrounds (on tensions between various migrant groups who went through the hostels, see e.g. Agutter & Ankeny, 2016).

Although many of the issues described above arose out of the need to run the hostels as efficient institutions designed to accommodate large numbers of people, the general absence of consideration of dietary preferences and cultural requirements, the lack of provisions for own cooking, and the insistence that food could only be consumed en masse in large dining halls together with other families had a significant impact on these refugee women. It deprived them of important and fundamental aspects of their identities, roles, and positions within the family unit.

7. Taking back control via food?

As might be expected, some refugee women did manifest self-empowerment, taking back control of cooking for their families in the only way they knew how: through the use of unauthorized stoves (see Figure 3).

These stoves, which were typically kerosene-fuelled burners and more occasionally improvised electric heaters, had been explicitly banned by the hostels as they were considered to be fire risks. In fact, there were several reported incidents of fires being started as a result of cooking or warming of food within the communal wooden and tin huts in which migrants were accommodated. For example at the Gawler hostel in South Australia in August 1950, a fire destroyed 14 of the 18 rooms in one hut. At the subsequent enquiry, DP Hector Maurovic told the coroner he was working in the camp kitchen when his wife rushed up and told him a fire had broken out in their hut after she had tried to heat milk for their baby on the electric heater ('Hostel Huts Death Trap Says Coroner', 1950).

Despite constant warnings that cooking on such appliances within the huts was both against hostel rules and a potential death trap, mothers continued to do so. Many of the migrants who have provided oral histories for our Hostel Stories project talk about how they, or their mothers, tried to provide traditional and more familiar fare for their families by using a kerosene or other burner, highlighting the importance of maintaining foodways to these



Figure 3. This example of an unauthorized style kerosene stove was provided for the Hostel Stories Exhibition at the Migration Museum. Photo courtesy of The History Trust of with thanks to Tina Koch whose mother cooked for her family on this stove in the hostel.

refugee women. According to Dr Lapedus at the Woodside Holding Centre, the residents purchased food in the nearby township and cooked it in their rooms, despite regulations against them doing so (NAA, A1658, 556/9/1 Part 1).

In another example of women and families taking control of the food that they ate, a Health Inspector reported that 60% of residents at the Benalla Holding Centre had ice chests in their cubicles, with regular deliveries of ice being made to the front gate of the centre: 'Husbands and defacto husbands arriving at weekends bring with them all kinds of food including rabbits, fowls and ducks, these are cooked privately' (NAA, A445, 220/13/30). Clearly it was particularly important to cook and eat together using familiar ingredients when families were occasionally reunited while men came back from the distant locations where they worked, often at the weekends. However, for the Inspector and the hostel itself, these practices were considered to be a health hazard because, as the report continues, 'all kinds of food refuse and litter are forced down lavatory pedestals or emptied into open drains' (NAA, A445, 220/13/30).

Seeking familiar food, or at least food that could be cooked in traditional ways, women migrants also ventured out into the wider community to local shops. Struggling with language, they purchased foods that they took back to the hostel to give their children. For instance in *Letters of Heartache and Hope*, DP Edith Törökfalvy (1995, p. 111) writes of buying food, such as eggs and bananas, for her son because he liked these foods, and they also were easily prepared and familiar; most importantly, these were foods that she felt were nutritious and better for him than what was provided in the hostel. When the weather permitted, Edith would also take bread, butter, and jam from the dining room and tinned sardines purchased from local shops to picnic by the Hume Weir at Bonegilla, in order to share more intimate time with her son, away from the mass feeding in the dining room. As Pennay (2012, p. 61) notes, it did not take long for local shops to begin to stock items that appealed to the new arrivals, even if the preparation of these foods was against hostel rules. In our oral histories,

several migrants mention the increasing availability of 'continental' foods in groceries proximate to hostels, as a result of demands from DPs.

From the early 1950s, social worker reports from hostels begin to articulate the problems faced by migrant families: for instance, '[c]ommunity dining rooms shift[ed] responsibility of children's feeding from parents ... the tendency is for members of families to dine separately', which therefore affected interactions between children and parents as well as the preservation of the family unit (NAA, C3076, 1/05/2004). Reports also highlight the fact that there are no breakfasts to prepare, no lunches to cut, no household chores, no need for shopping, no opportunities for talking to people outside the hostel, and limited ones for talking with others within the hostel. As all meals are provided, there is 'very little for the women to do to usefully and traditionally employ themselves' which was noted by a social worker often to result in a general state of apathy and relationship breakdowns (NAA, C3076, 1/05/2004). Reported consequences included unmonitored behaviours such as young children in high chairs

happily covering the floor around with food and drink ... Small boys and girls of three years holding up drinking mug above their heads turning on a tap of an orange-juice cordial urn, the mug running over on his head, body and the floor around. (NAA, C3076, 1/05/2004)

Unlike later assisted migrants who would be vocal in their complaints, writing to newspapers and government officials in both Australia and their home nations and marching in protest (see for example NAA, A1658, 556/14/1), there were few avenues of protest available to these early refugee women due to limitations of language and education as well as lack of involvement of external advocates such as unions and ethnic societies in the hostels during this time.¹¹ In a single show of defiance, DP women at the Cowra Centre, many of whom had been in residence for over two years, replaced the Australian flag with a home-made black flag in protest over cuts to rations ('Migrants at Cowra Hoist the Black Flag of "Mutiny"', 1950).¹² However, for these refugee families the main solution lay in leaving the hostel and finding a home of one's own. For some, anything was better than what was on offer in the hostels; in a report in the *Advertiser* (Adelaide) about one migrant, it was noted that refugee families would rather live in tents in swamp lands than in a hostel for several fundamental reasons:

although the surroundings were not pleasant, they preferred to live under unhygienic conditions ... her family could lead a normal, happy life ... she could now prepare what food her family desired. They also had the opportunity of leading a home life, which they were unable to do previously. ('Points from Letters', 1950)

Thus the disempowerment of refugee women in respect of food symbolised much more than simple loss of control over food, but was accompanied by deeper associations connected to the meaning of family, normalcy, and happiness; their sense of identity; and settling into a new 'home' (see also van der Horst, 2004).

8. Official responses

By 1953, the same year that the last ship carrying DPs arrived, Australian authorities had come to accept that adult 'migrants cannot be assimilated through their stomachs' but noted that their children were 'adopting a more broad-minded [*sic*] outlook and appreciation for unaccustomed dishes' (NAA, A445, 221/6/12), hence giving them a basis for continuing their assimilationist mandate. However, it should be noted that individuals working in some

hostels observed the problems caused by the food habits being forced on migrants, and did work within the parameters available to them to improve the situation for the affected refugee women.

At the Woodside Holding Centre in South Australia, for example, the director allowed women to purchase billy cans (a lightweight cooking pot in the form of a metal bucket), contrary to instructions from the government. This hostel was situated within the Woodside Army Camp; thus in military fashion, serves of food for an entire family were dished up into each can so that mothers could then apportion it to their children in the dining room. This practice gave the women back some control over the serving of food to their families, even if the food itself was not what they would have cooked (NAA, [A12799](#), 13). Similarly, at the Benalla Centre, serving procedures were altered: a 1950 Social Work report states that there were four mess rooms that are 'attractive in appearance and being smaller units have a homely appearance. The waitresses serve each table with dishes from which the women portion out their own helping' (NAA, [A437](#), 1950/6/173).

By the mid-1950s, refugee families had been joined by large numbers of assisted migrants from Europe. Larger numbers of certain nationalities resulted in designated separate sections within hostels divided along ethnic and national lines. These consolidated populations within hostels meant that kitchens could cater for specific nationalities more appropriately even if doing so was not officially sanctioned (NAA, [A445](#), 220/14/25). Similarly, the employment of refugee workers in hostel kitchens did result in some minor changes to the foods served and cooking processes. However, problems were noted with cooks who were migrants themselves, including that they often prepared dishes according to their own national food customs. This tendency was described as problematic not only because they might not be appetising to those from different backgrounds and because the rations issued were not intended for those methods of preparation, but also because

Migrants eating these meals are not becoming accustomed to the meals they will be served in the community outside the centre. This could be overcome if food were prepared by Australian methods. Food habits admittedly are difficult to alter, and adults may not find it easy to adapt themselves to new dishes, but for children there should be no difficulty and it should be encouraged as a phase of assimilation. (NAA, [A1658](#), 556/14/1)

As costs rose and food waste became an increasing problem, a 10-month study about plate waste and nutritional requirements was undertaken. Although this survey highlighted various European preferences including a fondness for light meatless breakfasts, green vegetables 'cooked by the European method', continental salads, and highly seasoned and highly spiced dishes, Australian authorities did not alter hostel menus based on this information. Rather, their response was to increase education as it was claimed to be necessary to make hostel residents realise that correct nutrition, and not taste or food preferences, was essential to good health (NAA, [A445](#), 221/6/12). Thus despite occasional concessions within some hostels largely due to the initiatives of some individuals who presumably recognised the direct and indirect effects of the food and dining systems within the hostels, systemic official policies remained oppressive, and thus often were disempowering for new migrants.

9. Conclusion

In 1952 in a letter written to the *Advertiser* (Adelaide), Robert Bortoux, a recent arrival himself, who had been in Europe at the end of the war made a series of perceptive observations:

We all have different tastes. How can it be possible to satisfy everyone, especially people of different nationalities, as we found out in Germany in the displaced persons camps. There the DPs [displaced persons] having no money, were given the food and allowed to cook it as and when they liked. Even then we had complaints about the quality of the food, although the quality and quantity was the same as the Germans themselves got. The only way to make the people happy is for them to be able to buy what they like and cook it as they like. ('Migrants' Hostel Problem', 1952)

Unfortunately, this lesson was not one that was learned in the Australian migrant hostels in the post-war period.

As we have argued in this paper, food is far more than nutrition or sustenance: because of its deep connections to family, culture, and identity, especially of women, what is cooked, how it is cooked, and how it is served can have critical implications that often are not anticipated or well understood, particularly in institutions such as the hostels. This paper contends that three main factors created negative impacts and contributed to the challenge to identity of women in migrant accommodation: the preparation of quintessentially 'Australian' menus that were alien to most of the refugee population (in part in an effort to assimilate new migrants); the communal dining arrangements that disrupted the basic social activity of commensality particularly within the family; and the lack of need for women to source and prepare food for their families due to the explicit prohibition of cooking for their families, which limited their opportunities to interact and converse with other women.

We believe that the frequently recurring complaints of 'how bad the food was' amongst migrants, especially from this early period, has not been well understood because scholars have taken food to be just food. As Janowski (2012b) argues 'food is a potent mnemonic for remembering the past and for attempting to recreate it' (p. 331); however, when migration is forced or traumatic, food and how it is prepared and consumed takes on an even more important role. Everyday foodways not only stand in for a past life, but they also represent a level of normality and are seen as essential to efforts to maintain the family and the independent members' roles within it. By widening our gaze, and viewing food as a lens through which to view broader issues relating to social relations, especially within the context of atypical or unusual host/migrant situations or following traumatic migrations, we hope that we have revealed the deeper impacts of these eating/dining experiences on women and their families, and encourage others to use food as a methodological approach, particularly within migrant history.

Notes

1. Single quotation marks are used throughout the article both for terms that were commonly used during the period (but which we do not necessarily endorse) and around direct quotations.
2. The term 'New Australian' was first coined by the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, in the late 1940s. Use of the term was encouraged in the wider Australian society in order to replace the pejorative terms commonly in use such as 'reffo' (short for 'refugee') and 'Balt' and as a symbol of assimilation; however, the term itself quickly took on a derogatory meaning, although some of our interviewees continue to use it to this day.
3. Good Neighbour Councils were formed and partially funded by the Australian Government. They had two official tasks: to assist new arrivals to assimilate into the norms and expectations of the host society, and to educate the Australian public about the benefits of the mass migration scheme towards a level of acceptance of new arrivals. For more information on this topic see for example Wills (2004).

4. 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants' is an Australian Research Council funded Linkage project. The project team (including this paper's authors) is comprised of staff and students at the University of Adelaide, in conjunction with community and government partners.
5. Interviews were typically conducted in locations most convenient for the interviewees, and often in their homes particularly for those of advanced age, with two members of the Hostel Stories team in attendance. Collection of registration forms and interviews continue to be ongoing for the project.
6. There are a number of reasons why earlier migrants did not produce written or oral accounts of their migrations, including but not limited to, literacy levels, language constraints, and availability of resources.
7. The 'Australian way of life' was a rarely defined but frequently used term which became common currency in the late 1940s and 1950s in Australia. It was regularly used in official, public, and even advertising vernacular and referred to the idea of a quintessential and specific Australian spirit or character which related to upholding certain ideals and values. For further discussion of this term, see for example White (1981, pp. 158–160), and for contemporaneous discussion, see Stanner (1953).
8. There is one exception to this, namely Gepps Cross in South Australia, where kitchenettes were added later; however, this hostel was a British-only one and not open to DPs.
9. Using the Elder Park Immigration Reception Depot menus for the period 1951–1952, Postiglione (2010) comments on the high frequency of meat served to residents. Interestingly, a memo to the Manager of Elder Park in July 1954 from the Director of Hostels comments that 'it appears migrants eat very little meat prepared for breakfast' and agrees to a menu which limits meat at breakfast to bacon on Sunday and fried sausage on Mondays with the usual eggs (fried, poached, boiled, and scrambled) as the hot option (State Records of South Australia: GRG7, 119/1953).
10. By the 1970s and 1980s, menu items became what might be thought of as more international in flavour, with breakfast including pickled pork alongside cereal, toast, and eggs. Lunches and dinners similarly included 'savoury spaghetti' and pepperoni pizza, alongside roast chicken and baked mutton. Sandwich fillings and cold meats included Polish salami, Mettwurst, and Polony, although the latter was probably simply a name change with what was Fritz now served as Polony. By the 1980s, hostels were catering in a much more multicultural manner as large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees arrived; dining room menus included 'ethnic' items such as Nasi Goreng, Chicken Chow Mein, Chop Suey, dim sims, and sweet and sour pork, all with distinctly Australian twists, including large lashings of MSG. See for example NAA, D2973, 3/1/4 and NAA, D2973, 3/1/1.
11. Please note that oral histories (audio files and transcripts) will be deposited at the State Library of South Australia at the conclusion of the project; within this paper references are to initials and date of interview.
12. By contrast British migrants frequently wrote to newspapers in Australia and at home, they also wrote to officials including the King and the British Prime Minister about camp conditions and in particular about communal eating, the lack of private cooking facilities, and the quality of the food. British migrants also involved external British clubs and societies and other organisations sympathetic to their plight, all actions which were largely unavailable to DP women. See Hassam (2009).
13. The rations were reportedly cut by up to 40%. Australian authorities argued that the rations were not 'cut' but rather 'changed' in line with age and gender nutritional requirements. Within days rations were restored.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our colleagues on the research team and to our community research partners for their support and feedback on this work, as well as to various audiences at conferences at which previous versions of this paper were presented. We particularly wish to thank the participants in our study.

Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (approval H-2012-120).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

The work was supported by the Australian Research Council under Linkage Grant [LP120100553] for 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants', in collaboration with the Migration Museum in Adelaide and in partnership with the cities of Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield, State Records, and the Vietnamese Community in Australia (South Australian chapter).

ORCID

Karen Agutter  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5970-4235>

Rachel A. Ankeny  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1547-6031>

Archival sources

National Archives Australia, A12111, 1/1957/22/6, Immigration - Hostels, holding centres and state reception centres - SCHEYVILLE Migrant Centre, dining room [photographic image], Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A12799, 13, Woodside - Use for British [migrants], Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A1658, 556/14/1, Immigration reception and training centres - Wacol (Queensland) - Displaced Persons Centre - General, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A1658, 556/9/1 Part 1, Immigration reception and training centres - Woodside - Displaced Persons Centre - General, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A434, 1949/3/25374, Bonegilla Centre - Food supplies, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section - Social Workers' Reports - Benalla Centre (Victoria), Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 220/13/30, Benalla - Health inspectors reports, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 220/14/25, Bonegilla centre inspection officer's report, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 221/6/12, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd - operational circulars - number 6, feeding of children and special diets, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/1/15, Social workers' reports on hostel visiting, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, C3076, 1/05/2004, Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - Department of Immigration - Social Workers [Box 699], Sydney.

National Archives Australia, C5102, CU1427/3, Hostels house migrants, Sydney.

National Archives Australia, D1917, D19/49, MWAD organisation, Adelaide.

National Archives Australia, D2973, 3/1/1, Operations catering general, Sydney.

National Archives Australia, D2973, 3/1/4, Menus, Sydney.

National Archives Australia, K279, 1948/979 Part 1, Migrant workers' hostels - general [Australian Construction Services], Perth.

National Archives Australia, MP414/1, WOS, Draft manual of instructions for the operation of the food section of migrant hostels, Melbourne.

National Archives Australia: A1658 556/3/10, Immigration - Displaced persons - Supplementation of diet of displaced persons for Australia, Canberra.

References

- Agutter, K. (2013). Displaced persons and the 'continuum of mobility' in the South Australian hostel system. In M. A. Kleinig & E. Richards (Eds.), *On the wing: Mobility before and after emigration to Australia, visible immigrants*, Vol. 7 (pp. 136–152). Spit Junction, NSW: Anchor Books Australia.
- Agutter, K., & Ankeny, R. A. (2016). Unsettling narratives: Prejudice in the hostel stories project. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 40, 464–477.
- Amigo, M. F. (2012). Liminal but competent: Latin American migrant children and school in Australia. *Child Studies in Diverse Contexts*, 2, 61–75.
- Atkins, P., & Bowler, I. (2001). *Food in society: Economy, Culture, Geography*. London: Arnold.
- Avakian, A. V. (2005). Shish Kebab Armenians?: Food and the construction and maintenance of ethnic and gender identities among Armenian American feminists. In A. V. Avakian & B. Haber (Eds.), *From Betty Crocker to feminist food studies: Critical perspectives on women and food* (pp. 257–280). Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Avieli, N. (2005). Vietnamese new year rice cakes: Iconic festive dishes and contested national identity. *Ethnology*, 44, 167–187.
- Bell, D., & Gill, V. (1997). *Consuming Geographies: We are where we eat*. London: Routledge.
- Blackburn, S. (2012). Food. In S. Blackburn (Ed.), *Growing up in Adelaide in the 1950s* (pp. 199–219). Brookvale, NSW: Hale & Iremonger.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of judgment of taste*. London: Routledge.
- Charles, N., & Kerr, M. (1988). *Women, food and families*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press.
- Chou, C. (2015). How chicken rice informs about identity. In S. Kerner, C. Chou, & M. Warmind (Eds.), *Commensality: From everyday food to feast* (pp. 139–150). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cinotto, S. (2001). *Una famiglia che mangia insieme: cibo ed etnicità nella comunità italoamericana di New York, 1920–1940* [A family that eats together: Food and ethnicity in the Italian American community of New York city, 1920–1940]. Torino: Otto Editore.
- Cwierka, K. (2006). *Modern Japanese cuisine: Food, power and national identity*. London: Reaktion.
- D'Sylva, A., & Beagan, B. L. (2011). 'Food is culture, but it's also power': The role of food in ethnic and gender identity construction among goan Canadian women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 20, 279–289.
- Damousi, J. (2013). "We are human beings, and have a past": The 'adjustment' of migrants and the Australian assimilation policies of the 1950s. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 59, 501–516.
- Darian-Smith, K., & Hamilton, P. (Eds.). (1994). *Memory and History in twentieth-century Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- DeVault, M. L. (1991). *Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Diner, H. (2002). *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish foodways in the age of migration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Duruz, J. (1999). Food as Nostalgia: Eating in the fifties and sixties. *Australian Historical Studies*, 113, 231–259.
- Dusselier, J. (2002). Does food make place? Food protests in Japanese American concentration camps. *Food and Foodways*, 10, 137–165.
- Fiddes, N. (1991). *Meat: A natural symbol*. London: Routledge.
- Fischler, C. (2011). Commensality, society and culture. *Social Science Information*, 50, 528–548.
- Forero, O., Ellis, K., Metcalfe, A., & Brown, R. (2009). Institutional dining rooms: Food ideologies and the making of a person. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Changing families, changing food* (pp. 226–245). Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gabaccia, D. (1998). *We are what we eat: Ethnic food and the making of Americans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Grignon, C. (2001). Commensality and social morphology: An essay of typology. In P. Scholliers (Ed.), *Food, drink and identity: Cooking, eating and drinking in Europe since the middle ages* (pp. 23–33). Oxford: Berg.
- Haebich, A. (2008). *Spining the dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press.
- Hassam, A. (2009). Hostels and communal feeding are not the british way of life. *Food, Culture & Society*, 12, 313–334.

- Hirschman, A. (1996). Melding the public and private spheres: Taking commensality seriously. *Critical Review*, 10, 533–550.
- Hostel Huts Death Trap Says Coroner. (1950, September 15). *Bunyip* (Gawler, SA), p. 1.
- James, A., Curtis, P., & Ellis, K. (2009). Negotiating family, negotiating food: Children as family participants. In A. James, A. T. Kj rholt, & T. Vejb rg (Eds.), *Children, food and identity in everyday life* (pp. 35–51). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Janowski, M. (2012a). Introduction: Consuming memories of home in constructing the present and imagining the future. *Food and Foodways*, 20, 175–186.
- Janowski, M. (2012b). Food in traumatic times: Women, foodways and ‘polishness’ during a wartime ‘Odyssey’. *Food and Foodways*, 20, 326–349.
- Johnson, C. M., Sharkey, J. R., Dean, W. R., McIntosh, W. A., & Kubena, K. S. (2011). It’s who i am and what we eat: Mothers’ food-related identities in family food choice. *Appetite*, 57, 220–228.
- Julier, A. (2013). *Eating together: Food, friendship and inequality*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Kerner, S., & Chou, C. (2015). Introduction. In S. Kerner, C. Chou, & M. Warmind (Eds.), *Commensality: From everyday food to feast* (pp. 1–12). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kerner, S., Chou, C., & Warmind, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Commensality: From everyday food to feast*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kershen, A. J. (2002). Introduction: Food in the migrant experience. In A. J. Kershen (Ed.), *Food in the migrant experience* (pp. 1–16). Hampshire England: Ashgate.
- Kunz, E. F. (1988). *Displaced persons: Calwell’s new Australians*. Sydney: Australian National University Press.
- Manfredi, S., & Newton, J. (1993). *Fresh from Italy*. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Martin, J. I. (1965). *Refugee settlers: A study of displaced persons in Australia*. Canberra: Australian National University.
- McIntosh, A., & Zey, M. (2005). Women as gatekeepers. In C. M. Counihan & S. L. Kaplan (Eds.), *Food and gender: Identity and power* (pp. 132–153). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Messer, E. (2007). Food definitions and boundaries: Eating constraints and human identities. In J. MacClancy, J. Henry, & H. Macbeth (Eds.), *Consuming the inedible: Neglected dimensions of food choice* (pp. 53–65). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- Migrants at Cowra Hoist the Black Flag of ‘Mutiny’. (1950, November 19). *The Sunday Herald* (Sydney), p. 1.
- Migrants’ Hostel Problem. (1952, May 19). *Advertiser* (Adelaide), p. 4.
- Morris, S. (2001). *Uranquinty remembers: A migrant experience 1848–1952*. Wagga Wagga, NSW: Uranquinty Progress Association.
- New Australians Pep Up Our Standard ‘Roast, Two Veggies’. (1950, January 15). *The Sunday Herald* (Sydney), p. 1.
- Pennay, B. (2007). *Food at Bonegilla*. Wodonga, VIC: Parklands Albury Wodonga.
- Pennay, B. (2012). “But no one can say he was hungry”: Memories and representations of Bonegilla reception and training centre. *History Australia*, 9, 43–63.
- Persian, J. (2012). Bonegilla: A failed narrative. *History Australia*, 9, 64–83.
- Points from Letters. (1950, November 27). *Advertiser* (Adelaide), p. 4.
- Portelli, A. (2006). What makes oral History different. In R. Perks & A. Thomson (Eds.), *The oral History reader* (pp. 46–57). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Postiglione, N. (2010). “It was just horrible”: The food experience of immigrants in 1950s Australia. *History Australia*, 7, 9.1–9.16.
- Punch, S., McIntosh, I., & Emond, R. (2009). Food and relationships: Children’s experiences in residential care. In A. James, A. T. Kj rholt, & T. Vejb rg (Eds.), *Children, food and identity in everyday life* (pp. 149–171). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Raman, P. (2011). Me in place, and the place in me. *Food, Culture & Society*, 14, 165–180.
- Raviv, Y. (2015). *Falafel nation: Cuisine and the making of national identity in Israel*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Rowe, A. E. (2012). Mint grows through the cracks in the foundation: Food practices of the assimilated Lebanese Diaspora in New England (USA). *Food and Foodways*, 20, 211–232.
- Sobal, J., Bove, C. F., & Rauschenbach, B. S. (2002). Commensal careers at entry into marriage: Establishing commensal units and managing commensal circles. *The Sociological Review*, 50, 378–397.

- Stanner, W. E. H. (1953). The Australian way of life. In W. V. Aughterson (Ed.), *Taking stock: Aspects of mid-century life in Australia* (pp. 3–14). Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire.
- State Records of South Australia: [GRG7, 119/1953](#); Superintendent, immigration reception depot, Elder Park Adelaide, Menus.
- Stir in Camp over Food for Migrants. (1952, July 29). *The West Australian* (Perth), p. 3.
- Stowers, S. L. (2012). Gastronomic Nostalgia: Salvadoran immigrants' cravings for their ideal meal. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition, 51*, 374–393.
- Törökfalvy, E. (1995). *Letters of heartache and hope: A story of emigration after world war II*. Hastings, VIC: Self published.
- van der Horst, H. (2004). Living in a reception centre: The search for home in an institutional setting. *Housing, Theory and Society, 21*, 36–46.
- Vallianatos, H., & Raine, K. (2008). Consuming food and constructing identities among Arabic and South Asian immigrant women. *Food, Culture & Society, 11*, 355–373.
- White, R. (1981). *Inventing Australia: Images and identity 1688–1980*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Wills, S. (2004). When good neighbours become good friends: The Australian embrace of its millionth migrant. *Australian Historical Studies, 36*, 332–354.

Section 5 : Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the migrant accommodation centres provided a critical liminal space to assist in the post-war policy of assimilation of non-English speaking migrants. Although early exposure to the ideas of assimilation, in particular through learning English, began in Europe and continued en-route, it was the time spent in the accommodation centres which provided an environment wherein new arrivals could be exposed to the ideal of the Australian way of life through planned and opportunistic activities and events.

Learning English was always a cornerstone of assimilation policy; however, the evolving content of lessons, the films shown, and the books available in libraries within the centres all provided focused opportunities to extend learning beyond language into the imagined social culture of Australianness. These lessons were particularly important for the women and children whose often long stays in the centres kept them isolated from the wider community and provided extra valuable teaching time. Children were generally considered the very best of migrants because of their assimilability, and their importance in assisting the assimilation of their parents. They were exposed to the Australian way of life, especially in their early years, through specifically established kindergartens. The provision of leisure activities including the showing of selected films and the encouragement of migrants to participate in recreational activities, provided further opportunities to expose new arrivals to English language, history and geography, social customs and quintessential examples of the Australian way of life. Finally, participation in important celebrations

including the Jubilee of Federation and the Queen's Coronation and subsequent tour provided additional didactic opportunities especially for women and children.

While considered separately in this thesis, all these opportunities were in fact interwoven in providing subtle means of re-education, in teaching acceptable social protocols and domestic habits and expectations not just for women and children but also in terms of men's education in Australian masculinity. Migrant men were re-educated, not only in training for new forms of labour, but also in social behaviour, about how to pass as Australian, including apparently in the social treatment of women and children.

By using the accommodation centres as a lens to study assimilation it is evident that the application of the policy was more nuanced and more gendered than has previously been considered. In addition, the way in which the authorities utilised the opportunities available within the centres, building upon on-going experience is evidence of both the need for frugality in implementing a policy at a time when resources were limited, and of the evolving nature of a policy that always lacked firm definition.

By viewing the implementation of the policy through the lens of the centres we can also better understand the contemporary definition of assimilation as a two-way process, where old and New Australians could interact and learn about, and from, each other. Immigration Department social workers and members of the GNM fulfilled their government appointed roles in assisting migrants but, more

importantly, they encouraged interaction between the migrants and the wider community. By encouraging the participation of church and other volunteer organisations within the centres, the number of Australians actively involved in the process of assimilation was expanded, in line with the official intent, and was effective in limiting financial outlay. The physical and psychological isolation often associated with the accommodation centres was lessened through the activities of volunteer organisations and the encouragement of participation in sporting and celebratory activities which took migrants out into the wider community. In this respect, assimilation was planned not just as an economically efficient policy, but also as a socially inclusive one that invited participation from a broad range of Australian citizenry.

The process of assimilation began before the migrant arrived in Australia; it had multi-faceted forms in the liminal space provided by the accommodation centres; and, it had far-reaching consequences in life beyond those centres. These long-term consequences, particularly on mental health and social adjustment, were first alluded to by Murphy in 1952,³⁵⁶ however, it was not until the 1960s that Jean Martin's longitudinal study of DPs highlighted the ongoing feelings of anger, inferiority, humiliation and second-class citizenship. More recently, Joy Damousi has shown that assimilation denied migrants a past and individual and collective memories, the consequences of which still affect them today.³⁵⁷ By focussing on the impact of the policy on a specific and generally under-represented cohort, women and children, this thesis contributes

³⁵⁶ Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person', p 47.

³⁵⁷ Damousi, J., "'We are Human Beings, and have a Past': The 'Adjustment' of Migrants and the Australian Assimilation Policies of the 1950s" in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 59, Number 4, 2013, p 516.

to this long term discussion. Women, especially those who arrived as unsupported mothers, have been largely excluded from the wider discussions of child placement and adoption. The lens of the accommodation centre offers a new view on their loss of identity as wives, mothers and care givers and their limited agency within the system, providing an important addition to our understanding of the gendered consequences of assimilation policy. These women were perfect examples of what Perera describes as the double bind of assimilation which pronounces migrants must “Be like just me”, and again in the same breath, “You can never be just like me”.³⁵⁸

This thesis has shown that, as Haebich argues, ‘[a]ssimilation’s meanings, its application and genealogy, are far more complex than our potted policy histories suggest’.³⁵⁹ The policy of assimilation as it was applied to post-war migrants was ill-defined, poorly financed, and as much about conditioning Australians in the acceptance of new arrivals as re-educating migrants into the Australian way of life. Furthermore, because, as Tim Rowse suggests, the ideal of assimilation is ‘built into the very fabric of Australian society’,³⁶⁰ it continues to influence policy and migrant reception today. Examining the assimilation policy of the past, in all its forms and consequences, continues to be of relevance and importance especially since, as Haebich reminds us, although abandoned and something of a dirty word, assimilation for many ordinary Australians retains a nostalgic appeal.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Perera, S., 'Whiteness and its discontents: Notes on politics, gender, sex and food in the year of Hanson' in *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Volume 20, Number 2, 1999, p 187.

³⁵⁹ Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream*, p 9.

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream*, p 9.

³⁶¹ Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream*, p 9.

Section 6 : Composite Bibliography

The following is a composite bibliography comprising all works referenced in the body of the thesis and articles 1 to 7.

Archival Sources

Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers

Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, 1945-1958.

South Australian Parliamentary Records

South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 1948-1960.

Girl Guides Association Archives

Girl Guides Archives, Norwood, South Australia, 1948-1960.

*National Archives Australia (NAA)*³⁶²

NAA: **A12052; 106-109**, Dojczman Kazimiera Born 6 March 1912; Maria Born 25 March 1939; Jozefa Born 19 July 1940; Hedwig Born 24 April 1948.

NAA: **A12111; 1/1955/22/27**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Woodside, Migrant Centre, South Australia, Pre-School Children [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12111; 1/1955/22/7**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Scheyville, Migrant Centre, New South Wales, Pre-School Children [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12111; 1/1956/22/2**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Bonegilla, Reception Centre, Pre-School Children. A Prized Migrant Is Helped onto the Scales During a Monthly Medical Check at Bonegilla. A Friendly Doctor Examines Children in the Familiar Surroundings of the Play Centre [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12111; 1/1956/22/29**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Bonegilla, Reception Centre, Pre-School Children. Sheep and Cattle Stud near Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre, Vic, Migrant Children Cluster around Mr John Mitchell to Touch a Two Week Old Dorset Lamb He Is Holding [Photographic Image].

³⁶² The reference style for NAA documents, in accordance with NAA guidance, is NAA: **Series Number; Control Number; Title**

NAA: **A12111; 1/1956/22/35**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Bonegilla, Reception Centre, Pre-School Children."Yes My Dear, I Thought She Looked Dreadful..." Afternoon Tea Party in Dolls' Corner at Bonegilla Pre School Centre [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12111; 1/1956/22/37**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Bonegilla, Reception Centre, Pre-School Children. Teacher Miss I Ryan Chats with Migrant Mother [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12111; 1/1957/22/6**, Immigration - Hostels, Holding Centres and State Reception Centres - Scheyville Migrant Centre, Dining Room [Photographic Image].

NAA: **A12799; 3**, Historical Outline of Migrant Accommodation Division.

NAA: **A12799; 9**, Migrant Accommodation Centre Division - Functions.

NAA: **A12799; 13**, Woodside - Use for British [Migrants].

NAA: **A1361; 33/1/18 PART 1**, Migrant Education - General - Education in Immigration Centres.

NAA: **A1361; 33/21/29**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials – Australianization.

NAA: **A1361; 33/21/31**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials - Australianisation Material.

NAA: **A1361; 33/21/32**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials - Surveys of Migrant Education.

NAA: **A1361; 33/21/5 PART 1**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials - Australianisation Syllabus.

NAA: **A1361; 33/21/8 PART 1**, Migrant Education - Teaching Techniques and Materials - Teaching Methods – General.

NAA: **A1361; 33/3/3 PART 1**, Migrant Education - Copies of Letters Written from Migrant Camps to Other Bodies.

NAA: **A1361; 33/7/5 PART 25**, Migrant Education - Radio Instruction for Migrants - Radio Script "Making Friends" - a Programme for New Australian Women - Numbers 1 to 100.

NAA: **A1361; 33/8/13**, Migrant Education - Publications - English on the Way [1.5cm].

NAA: **A1658; 556/3/10**, Immigration - Displaced Persons - Supplementation of Diet of Displaced Persons for Australia.

NAA: **A1658; 556/14/1**, Immigration Reception and Training Centres - Wacol (Queensland) - Displaced Persons Centre - General.

NAA: **A1658; 556/9/1 Part 1**, Immigration Reception and Training Centres – Woodside – Displaced Persons Centre – General.

NAA: **A1838; 862/24/1**, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Cultural Assimilation of Immigrants.

NAA: **A1887; IPS/59**, "Pre-School" Bulletin.

NAA: **A1887; IPS/98**, Migration in Action.

NAA: **A1887; IPS/157A**, Learn English Campaign "Take One" Poster.

NAA: **A2567; 1956/82**, [Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre] - Presbyterian Church in Australia.

NAA: **A434; 1949/3/13604**, Use of School Buildings at Immigration Centres for Religious Instruction.

NAA: **A434; 1949/3/24452**, Placement of Children of Displaced Persons Who Are Widows.

NAA: **A434; 1949/3/25374**, Bonegilla Centre - Food Supplies.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/1145**, Unaccompanied Youths and Children.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/1573**, Young Men's Christian Association - Offer of Assistance in Migrant Centres.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/24052**, Uranquinty Centre - Report on Disturbances 13 June 1950.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/25969**, Placement of Displaced Persons - Widows with Children - Policy.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/27104**, Widows with Dependent Children at Immigration Centres- Employment and Accommodation.

NAA: **A434; 1950/3/5084**, Accommodation at Labour and National Service Hostels for Single Women.

NAA: **A436; 1948/5/330**, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Conditioning Campaign Conferences with Press & Radio.

NAA: **A436; 1949/5/95**, Federal Interchurch Migration Committee - Re Migration.

NAA: **A437; 1948/6/377**, Draft Lectures for Welfare and Information Officers on Displaced Persons Ships.

NAA: **A437; 1949/6/230**, SS Skaugum - Report by Ship's Information Welfare Officer.

NAA: **A437; 1949/6/274**, Reports by Welfare and Information Officer, Mr L A Tepper.

NAA: **A437; 1949/6/385**, Social Worker's Report, Uranquinty Centre, NSW.

NAA: **A437; 1950/6/91**, Reports by Social Worker at Brisbane, Queensland.

NAA: **A437; 1950/6/173**, Social Welfare Section - Social Workers' Reports - Benalla Centre (Victoria).

NAA: **A437; 1950/6/213**, Education in Holding Centres - Use of Craft Work to Motivate Learning in English.

NAA: **A438 1950/7/720**, Good Neighbour Councils and New Settlers Leagues - Conference - Brisbane - 15-16th September, 1950.

NAA: **A438; 1949/7/1510**, Appointment of Social Workers to Department of Immigration.

NAA: **A438; 1949/7/988**, Publicity Films - for Use in Displaced Persons Camps Overseas.

NAA: **A438; 1950/7/387**, Conference on Duties of Social Workers.

NAA: **A442; 1951/14/5144** YWCA of Australia - Immigration Inquiries of Activities [3cms].

NAA: **A442; 1951/14/5145**, Assimilation Activities of Migrants of Wacol Centre [15 Pages].

NAA: **A443; 1951/15/4688**, Bonegilla Centre - Cinema Facilities.

NAA: **A445; 112/3/42**, Good Neighbour Movement - Regional Conferences 1954.

NAA: **A445; 112/1/10**, Assimilation Activities in Benalla Centre.

NAA: **A445; 112/1/26**, Assimilation Activites SA Advise from CMO.

NAA: **A445; 112/1/33**, Coronation Celebrations in Immigration Centres.

NAA: **A445; 140/5/6**, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare.

NAA: **A445; 146/1/1**, Australian Citizenship Convention 1950 General.

NAA: **A445; 146/3/3A**, Australian Citizenship Convention 1952 General.

NAA: **A445; 146/8/14**, Citizenship Convention 1954. General. Part 2.

NAA: **A445; 174/7/17**, Australianization Syllabus - Provision of Educational Books, Materials, Equipment.

NAA: **A445; 174/8/24**, English Classes for Migrant Women in Canberra Play Centres.

NAA: **A445; 174/9/2**, Children in Migrant Workers Hostels.

NAA: **A445; 197/1/2**, Greek - Assisted Passage Agreement [102 Pages].

NAA: **A445; 200/1/5**, Medical - Displaced Persons. Policy & Procedure in Regard to Migrants & Applicants, for Landing Permits.

NAA: **A445; 214/1/3**, Library Services for Migrants.

NAA: **A445; 220/1/1**, Establishment of Canteen Services at Migrant Centres. Part 1.

NAA: **A445; 220/11/1** Activities of YWCA in Migrant Centres.

NAA: **A445; 220/11/2**, Quarterly Regional Conferences - YWCA.

NAA: **A445; 220/13/30**, Benalla - Health Inspectors Reports.

NAA: **A445; 220/14/25**, Bonegilla Centre Inspection Officer's Report.

NAA: **A445; 220/2/2**, Films for Migrant Centres Part 2.

NAA: **A445; 220/2/3**, Films for Migrant Centres Part 3.

NAA: **A445; 220/2/5**, Cinema Equipment at Migrant Centres. Part 2.

NAA: **A445; 220/35/21**, Woodside Centre - Establishment of State School Etc.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/17**, Scheyville - Pre-School Play Centre.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/20**, Wacol - Pre-School Play Centre.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/22**, Woodside Pre-School Play Centre.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/7**, Benalla Pre-School Play Centre.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/77**, Pre-School Centres - Supervisory Reports.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/8**, Bonegilla - Pre School Play Centre. Part 2.

NAA: **A445; 220/51/88**, Benalla - Pre-School Play Centre.

NAA: **A445; 220/52/13**, Report on Creches in Migrant Centres.

NAA: **A445; 220/9/4**, Recreational and Sporting Facilities at Migrant Centres - National Fitness Officers' Assistance.

NAA: **A445; 221/6/12**, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd - Operational Circulars - Number 6, Feeding of Children and Special Diets.

NAA: **A445; 261/5/1**, Assimilation Film 'No Strangers Here'.

NAA: **A445; 276/1/15**, Social Workers' Reports on Hostel Visiting.

NAA: **A445; 276/2/10**, Social Welfare. Widows and Unmarried Mothers with Dependent Children.

NAA: **A445; 276/2/11**, Social Welfare Special Problems Financial.

NAA: **A445; 276/2/7**, Social Welfare - Special Problems, Marital.

NAA: **A445; 276/3/1**, Senior Social Workers Annual Reports - All States.

NAA: **A445; 276/3/2**, Social Workers Annual Reports - New South Wales.

NAA: **A445; 276/3/4**, Social Workers Annual Reports - South Australia.

NAA: **A446; 1962/65241**, Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Hostels and Centres Part 1.

NAA: **A446; 1962/65689**, Assimilation Activities State Branches.

NAA: **A446; 1962/65900**, Education in Migrant Centres - General Part 1.

NAA: **A6980; S250104**, Displaced Persons - Policy Part 1 [370 Pages].

NAA: **A879; C691**, Rosewater Wool Stores Migrant Workers Accommodation.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 18/2**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Sale, Victoria - Guessing English Names out of a Box - Photo 1.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 18/2**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Sale, Victoria - Materials Are Taken out of Doors on Suitable Days - Photo 2.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 18/2**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Sale, Victoria - Manipulative Material - Photo 9.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 18/8**, Photograph Album. Pre-School Play Centre, Immigration Centre, Wacol, Queensland.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 19/1**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - Discussion Group - Subject 'the Persian Kitten' - Photo 2.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 19/1**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - Clay - Adequate Quantity for Free Expression - Photo 6.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 19/1**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - as Much Time Is Spent out of Doors as Indoors - Photo 12.

NAA: **AA1969/441; 19/1**, Photograph Album - Pre-School Play Centre - Immigration Centre - Somers, Victoria - Improvised Toilet and Wash Room - Good Hygiene Habits Are Encouraged in the Play Centre - Photo 13.

NAA: **B550; 1948/23/5138**, Displaced Persons. Policy - Placement of Family Groups and Heads of Families.

NAA: **B550; 1950/23/1941**, Displaced Persons - Placement of Widows with Children - Procedure.

NAA: **C3076; 1/05/2004**, Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - Department of Immigration - Social Workers [Box 699].

NAA: **C3076; 5/1/4 CENTRAL**, Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - Central - Department of Immigration - Social Workers [Box 699].

NAA: **C3076; N5/1/12**, Commonwealth Hostels Limited - Welfare General - Nsw - Religious Services and Church Welfare Committees [Box 701].

NAA: **C3939; N1963/75029**, Immigration - the Reception and Aftercare of Single Female Migrants [Box 165].

NAA: **C5102; CU1427/3**, Hostels House Migrants.

NAA: **CP815/1; 021.188 PART 3**, Immigration - 'the New Australian' [Newspaper for New Migrants] - Part 3.

NAA: **CP815/1; 021.192 PART 1**, Immigration - 'the New Australian' - Letters from Readers - Part 1.

NAA: **CP815/1; 21.134**, Immigration - Displaced Persons - General.

NAA: **CP815/1; 21.166**, Immigration - Bulletin Board News - Displaced Persons.

NAA: **D1917; D15/50**, Employment of Displaced Persons - Widows with Children.

NAA: **D1917; D19/49**, MWAD Organisation.

NAA: **D1917; D207/45**, National Film Board.

NAA: **D1917; D23/49 PART 2**, Displaced Persons Hostel Accommodation.

NAA: **D1917; D24/46 Part 2**, Decentralisation - Migrant Hostels Part 2.

NAA: **D1917; D47/47 Part 3**, DP Scheme Instructions Part 3.

NAA: **D1917; D6/48 Part 2**, Progress Reports DP Scheme.

NAA: **D2973; 3/1/1**, Operations Catering General.

NAA: **D2973; 3/1/4**, Menus.

NAA: **D2973; 3/1/4**, Operations - Catering - Menus.

NAA: **D2973; 5/1/1**, Welfare General.

NAA: **D400; SA1956/8959**, Assimilation General Monthly Reports.

NAA: **D400; SA1959/3095**, Inquiry into Conduct and Progress of Migrant Children.

NAA: **D400; SA1959/3783**, Assimilation – Social Welfare Officers.

NAA: **D400; SA1960/69**, Assimilation Division Central Office Instructions for Information of Divisional Heads.

NAA: **D618; IM4 PART 1**, [Department of Immigration] - Gawler SA NA [New Australians] Hostel Accommodation.

NAA: **D618; IM6 PART 1**, Department of Immigration] - Woodside SA Camp Conversion of Areas for Displaced Persons.

NAA: **J25; 1961/9500**, 1) Assimilation - 2) New Settlers League - 3) General Policy.

NAA: **J25; 1966/2798**, Social Welfare - Migrant Accommodation - Problem Cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels].

NAA: **K279; 1948/979 Part 1**, Migrant Workers' Hostels - General [Australian Construction Services].

NAA: **K279; 1948/979 Part 2**, Migrant Workers' Hostels - General [Australian Construction Services] [Part 2].

NAA: **K38; 1979/1354**, Migrant Information Booklets and Tapes [Department of Labour and National Service/Employment and Industrial Relations].

NAA: **K403; W59/829**, [Immigration Department, Migrants] Assimilation - Welfare Work - Country Areas.

NAA: **K403; W59/926 Part 1**, [Immigration Department] Instructions - Migrant Centres - Numbers 1 - 100.

NAA: **MP1129/1; 53/38/359**, Displaced Persons. Policy. Holding File for Former DP Policy File [0.25cm].

NAA: **MP239/7; 573/6/1**, Displaced Persons - Financial Arrangements - Policy and Procedure - Covering Advances, Fares, Travel Warrants and Excess Baggage.

NAA: **MP240/1; 1948/23/3295**, Displaced Persons - Education Of: English Language (& Civics) Classes.

NAA: **MP275/1; 1953/1067**, Migrant Assimilation - English Language Courses.

NAA: **MP414/1; WOS**, Draft Manual of Instructions for the Operation of the Food Section of Migrant Hostels.

NAA: **MP607; 1959/3608**, Committee on 'Assimilation and Progress of Young Migrants (to 18 Years) in Australian Community' – Established by Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council – Seeking Information.

NAA: **MP651/1; 1956/273**, Assimilation of Migrants in Industry and Their Personal Problems - Personal Practice Branch.

NAA: **PP6/1; 1950/H/4191**, Approved Institutions Transfer of Displaced Persons, Minors.

NAA: **SP369/3; VOLUME 8/2**, Nation's Forum of the Air - 'What Do We Mean by Assimilation of Migrants?' [Topical Debate] [Box 7].

State Library of South Australia (SLSA)

SLSA: **SRG; 703/14/2**, Good Neighbour Council SA Meeting Minutes 1961-66.

SLSA: **SRG 703/1**, Good Neighbour Council SA Meeting Minutes 1949-1962.

State Records of South Australia (SRSA)

SRSA: **GRS 7330/1**, St Leonards School Journals.

SRSA: **GRS 7330/1**, St Leonards School Mothers Club Minutes.

SRSA: **GRG7; 119/1953**, Superintendent, Immigration Reception Depot, Elder Park Adelaide, Menus.

The Australian Red Cross Archives, North Melbourne

The Australian Red Cross Society, *Annual Report*, Australian Red Cross, Adelaide, 1949-58.

Adventuring, Volume 15, Number 9, 1953

Toc H Archives, Adelaide

Toc H South Australia, Adelaide Branch Report for Year Ending 30 September 1955.

Toc H South Australia, Annual Report (Secretary) 1952.

Toc H South Australia, Women's Association Monthly Newsheet - August 1967.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Brisbane Telegraph, Brisbane, 25 May 1950.

Bunyip, Gawler, SA, 1950-1951.

Cairns Post, Cairns, Queensland, 17 April 1953.

Cootamundra Herald, Cootamundra NSW, 10 July 1953.

English A New Language: A Bulletin for Teachers of New Australians in Continuation Classes, Commonwealth Office of Education, Canberra, 1950-1960.

Education News, Commonwealth Office of Education, Canberra, 1948-1960.

Digest: Report of Proceedings of the Australian Citizenship Convention, Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Canberra, 1950-1960.

Migration in Action, Department of Information for Department of Immigration, Canberra, n.d. (circa early 1950s).

Goulburn Evening Press, Goulburn, NSW, 17 July 1950.

Lutheran Herald, Adelaide, 16 September 1950.

National Advocate, Bathurst, NSW, July-December 1948.

Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, Newcastle, NSW, 5 November 1949.

North-Eastern Advertiser, Scottsdale, Tasmania, 20 November 1951.

Northern Argus, Clare, SA, 24 November 1954.

Singleton Argus, Singleton, NSW, 24 May 1948.

South Coast Times and Wollongong Argus, Wollongong, 19 October 1950.

The Adelaide Church Guardian, Adelaide, 1 August 1951.

The Advertiser, Adelaide, 1948-1952.

The Age, Melbourne, 1949-1951.

The Argus, Melbourne, 1952-1956.

The Benalla Standard, Benalla, Vic., 4 June 1953.

The Biz, Fairfield, NSW, 10 October 1956.

The Canberra Times, ACT, 24 January 1953.

The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, 3 June 1953.

The Daily News, Perth, 28 September 1949.

The Good Neighbour, Canberra, August 1950-December 1960.

The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser, NSW, 15 December 1949.

The Horsham Times, Horsham, Vic., 3 June 1950.

The Mercury, Hobart, Tas., 21 July 1947.

The New Australian: Monthly Bulletin of the Department of Immigration to Assist European Migrants, Canberra, January 1949-December 1953.

The Newcastle Sun, Newcastle, NSW, 9 July 1945.

The News, Adelaide, 1948-1955.

The Northam Advertiser, WA, 6 April 1951.

The Riverine Grazier, Hay, NSW, 21 July 1950.
The Sun, Sydney, NSW, August-September 1946.
The Sunday Herald, Sydney, 1950-1951.
The Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, 1947-1951.
The West Australian, Perth, 1950-1952.
Tomorrow's Australians: Bulletin of the Department of Immigration, Canberra, April 1948-January 1950.
Tribune, Sydney, 17 Sep 1949..
Western Herald, Bourke, NSW, 24 August 1956.
Wodonga and Towong Sentinel, Wodonga, Victoria, 26 January 1951.

Secondary Sources

- Agutter, K. & Ankeny, R., 'Unsettling Narratives: Overcoming Prejudices in the Hostel Stories Project' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 40, Number 4, 2016, pp 464-77.
- Agutter, K., 'Allied Captives! Italian Immigrants in World War I Australia' in *Australian Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2009.
- Agutter, K., 'Assimilation through Play: Migrant Hostel Play Centres in Post-War Australia' in *International Journal of Play*, Volume 5, Number 3, 2016, pp 277-91.
- Agutter, K., 'Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System', in Kleinig, M.A. & Richards, E. (eds.), *On the Wing: Mobility before and after Emigration to Australia, Visible Immigrants Vol 7*, Anchor Books Australia, Spit Junction, NSW 2013, pp 136-52.
- Agutter, K., 'Fated to Be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children' in *Children Australia*, Volume 41, Number 3, 2016, pp 224-31.
- Aitken-Swan, J., *Widows in Australia: A Survey of the Economic and Social Condition of Widows with Dependent Children*, Council of Social Service of New South Wales, Sydney, 1962.
- Allison, M.T., 'On the Ethnicity of Ethnic Minorities in Sport' in *Quest*, Volume 31, Number 1, 1979, pp 50-56.
- Allison, M.T., 'Sport, Ethnicity, and Assimilation' in *Quest*, Volume 34, Number 2, 1982, pp 165-75.
- Alomes, S., *A Nation at Last: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde NSW, 1988.

- Amigo, M.F., 'Liminal but Competent: Latin American Migrant Children and School in Australia' in *Child Studies in Diverse Contexts*, Volume 2, Number 1, 2012, pp 61-75.
- Anderson, B.R., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.
- Appleyard, R.T., 'Immigration and National Development', in Roberts, H. (ed.), *Australia's Immigration Policy*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, West Australia, 1972, pp 13-28.
- Appleyard, R.T., *The Ten Pound Immigrants*, Boxtree, London, 1988.
- Ardlie, L.E., *Australianization to Melting Pot : A Study of the Work of the South Australian Good Neighbour Council*, Honours Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1967.
- Atkins, P. & Bowler, I., *Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography*, Arnold, London, 2001.
- Australian Immigration Advisory Council, *Report of the Committee on Migrant Youth in the Australian Community*, Canberra, 1973.
- Australian Liaison Committee of Women's National Organisations, 'Woman Citizen', in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.), *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, pp 72a-72d.
- Avakian, A.V., 'Shish Kebab Armenians?: Food and the Construction and Maintenance of Ethnic and Gender Identities among Armenian American Feminists', in Avakian, A.V. & Haber, B. (eds.), *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food* University of Massachusetts Press, Boston, 2005, pp 257-80.
- Avieli, N., 'Vietnamese New Year Rice Cakes: Iconic Festive Dishes and Contested National Identity' in *Ethnology*, Number 44, 2005, pp 167-87.
- Barcs, E., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.), *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, pp 36-45.
- Beilharz, P., Hogan, T., & Shaver, S., *The Martin Presence: Jean Martin and the Making of the Social Sciences in Australia*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2015.
- Bell, D. & Gill, V., *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*, Routledge, London, 1997.
- Bennett, T., 'Introduction: National Times', in Bennett, T., Buckridge, P., et al. (eds.), *Celebrating the Nation: A Critical Study of Australia's Bicentenary*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1992, pp xiii-xviii.
- Bertrand, I. & Collins, D., *Government and Film in Australia*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1981.
- Bertrand, I. (ed.), *Cinema in Australia a Documentary History*, New South Wales University Press, New South Wales, 1989.

- Betts, K., 'Review of Mark Lopez, the Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975' in *People and Place*, Volume 8, Number 3, 2000, pp 83-86.
- Blackburn, S., 'Food', in Blackburn, S. (ed.), *Growing up in Adelaide in the 1950s*, Hale & Iremonger, Brookvale, NSW, 2012, pp 199-219.
- Borrie, W.D. & Packer, D.R.G., *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954.
- Borrie, W.D., 'Concepts and Practices', in Borrie, W.D. (ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, UNESCO, Paris, 1959, pp 15-156.
- Borrie, W.D., 'New and Old Australians', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 169-86.
- Bostock, J., 'The Kindergarten as the Foundation for Community Building in Report of Education Conference Brisbane' in proceedings of *Education and World Reconstruction*, New Education Fellowship (ed.), New Education Fellowship, Brisbane, 1943, pp 57-61.
- Bosworth R & Wilton J, 'A Lost History?: The Study of European Migration to Australia' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 27, 1981, pp 221-31.
- Bosworth, R., 'Conspiracy of the Consuls? Official Italy and the Bonegilla Riot of 1952' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 22, Number 89, 1987, pp 547-68.
- Bowles, K., 'Limit of Maps?: Locality and Cinemagoing in Australia' in *Media International Australia*, Number 131, 2009, pp 83-94.
- Caiger, G. (ed.), *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953.
- Carey, H.M., *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards NSW, 1996.
- Carrington, L., *A Real Situation: The Story of Adult Migrant Education in Australia 1947 to 1970*, Tara, Canberra, 1997.
- Cell, J.W., 'The New Australians', in Preston, R. (ed.), *Contemporary Australia: Studies in History, Politics, and Economics*, Duke University Press, Durham USA, 1969, pp 226-54.
- Charles, N. & Kerr, M., *Women, Food and Families*, Manchester University Press, Manchester UK, 1988.
- Ching Tsz Fung, P., *A Place 'Midway' between the Old Life and the New: A Case Study of the Migrant Hostel at Maribyrnong*, PhD Thesis, The Australian Centre, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, 2013.
- Chou, C., 'How Chicken Rice Informs About Identity', in Kerner, S., Chou, C., et al. (eds.), *Commensality: From Everyday Food to Feast*, Bloomsbury, London, 2015, pp 139-50.
- Cinotto, S., *Una Famiglia Che Mangia Insieme: Cibo Ed Etnicità Nella Comunità Italoamericana Di New York, 1920–1940 [a Family That Eats*

- Together: Food and Ethnicity in the Italian American Community of New York City, 1920–1940*], Otto Editore, Torino, 2001.
- Clarke, P., 'Migrant Children in Preschool', in Langford, P. & Sebastian, P. (eds.), *Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia*, Australia International Press & Publications, Kew, Victoria, 1979, pp 227-32.
- Cohen, G.D., *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.
- Collins, J., *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land*, Pluto, Sydney, 1988.
- Collins, J.A. & Lekkas, P., 'Fit for Purpose: Australia's National Fitness Campaign' in *Medical Journal of Australia*, Volume 195, Number 11, 2011, pp 714-16.
- Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council, *First Report on the Progress and Assimilation of Migrant Children in Australia*, Canberra, 1960.
- Connors, J., *Royal Visits to Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2015.
- Conzen, K.N., 'Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of a Pluralist America', in Trommler, F. & Shore, E. (eds.), *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, Berghahn, New York, 2001, pp 7-21.
- Cox, D.R., *Migration and Welfare an Australian Perspective*, Prentice Hall, New York, 1987.
- Cox, J.B., 'Helping Migrant Children to Settle into School Life' in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, pp 31-34.
- Craig, J.I., *Assimilation of European Immigrants: A Study in Role Assumption and Fulfilment*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1954.
- Cresciani, G., *The Italians in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.
- Cumpston, J.H.L. & Henig, C.M., *Pre-School Centres in Australia*, Commonwealth Department of Health, Canberra, 1945.
- Curthoys, A., 'Children, Women and Men', in Curthoys, A., Martin, A., *et al.* (eds.), *Australians from 1939*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, Broadway, New South Wales, 1987, pp 309-27.
- Cwiertka, K., *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, Reaktion, London, 2006.
- Damousi, J., "'We Are Human Beings, and Have a Past": The "Adjustment" of Migrants and the Australian Assimilation Policies of the 1950s' in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 59, Number 4, 2013, pp 501-16.
- Damousi, J., *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001.

- Damousi, J., *Memory and Migration in the Shadow of War Australia's Greek Immigrants after World War II and the Greek Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2015.
- Darian-Smith, K. & Hamilton, P. (eds.), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.
- Davison, G., 'Welcoming the World: The 1956 Olympic Games and the Re - Presentation of Melbourne' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, pp 64-76.
- Day, R.D., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in London, Canada. A Study in Assimilation' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 16, Number 1, 1981, pp 37-52.
- DeLaet, D.L., 'Introduction: The Invisibility of Women in Scholarship on International Migration', in Kelson, G.A. & De Laet, D.L. (eds.), *Gender and Migration*, New York University Press, New York, 1999, pp 1-20.
- Dellios, A. 'It Was Just You and Your Child': Single Migrant Mothers, Generational Story Telling and Australia's Migrant Heritage', (unpublished, 2017) referenced with permission of author.
- Dellios, A., 'Commemorating Migrant Camps: Vernacular Memories in Official Spaces,' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 39, Number 2, 2015, pp 252-71.
- Dellios, A., 'Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 40, Number 4, 2016, pp 418-32.
- Department of Environment and Water Resources, *National Heritage List: Bonegilla Migrant Camp - Block 19*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/7aa61b01-135d-4d1f-bd8e-fe939bb92818/files/bonegilla.pdf>.
- DeVault, M.L., *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.
- Diner, H., *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2002.
- Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.
- D'Sylva, A. & Beagan, B.L., "Food Is Culture, but It's Also Power": The Role of Food in Ethnic and Gender Identity Construction among Goan Canadian Women' in *Journal of Gender Studies*, Number 20, 2011, pp 279-89.
- Duncan, C., 'As Others See Us' in *Sight and Sound*, Volume 17, Number 63, 1948, pp 12-14.
- Duruz, J., 'Food as Nostalgia: Eating in the Fifties and Sixties' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 113, 1999, pp 231-59.
- Dusselier, J., 'Does Food Make Place? Food Protests in Japanese American Concentration Camps' in *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History*

- and Culture of Human Nourishment*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2002, pp 137-65.
- Dziedzic, S. & Belot, H., *Australian Citizenship Law Changes Mean Migrants Will Face Tougher Tests*, Accessed 20 April 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-20/migrants-to-face-tougher-tests-for-australian-citizenship/8456392>.
- Eggleston, F.W., 'The Australian Nation', in Caiger, G. (ed.), *The Australian Way of Life*, William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1953, pp 1-22.
- Eskner, H.J. & Orellana, M.F., 'Liminality as Linguistic Process: Immigrant Youth and Experiences', in Jacqueline, K. (ed.), *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, Transcript, Verlag, 2005, pp 175-206.
- Etzioni, A., 'Toward a Theory of Public Ritual ' in *Sociological Theory*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2000, pp 44-59.
- Eubel, S., 'Flying Fräuleins': The Construction of Single Migrant Women in Discourses on Migration in Australia and West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s' in *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Volume 17, Number 6, 2010, pp 743-58.
- Fairbairn, I., 'Australian Citizenship Convention' in *Adventuring*, Volume 15, Number 9, 1953, n.p.
- Featherstone, L. & Kaladelfos, A., *Sex Crimes in the Fifties*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Vic, 2016.
- Fiddes, N., *Meat: A Natural Symbol*, Routledge, London, 1991.
- Fischler, C., 'Food, Self and Identity' in *Social Science Information*, Volume 27, Number 2, 1988, pp 275-92.
- Fischler, C., 'Commensality, Society and Culture' in *Social Science Information*, Number 50, 2011, pp 528-48.
- Forero, O., Ellis, K., Metcalfe, A., & Brown, R., 'Institutional Dining Rooms: Food Ideologies and the Making of a Person', in Jackson, P. (ed.), *Changing Families, Changing Food*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, England, 2009, pp 226-45.
- Franklin, J., 'Calwell, Catholicism and the Origins of Multicultural Australia' in proceedings of *Catholics in Australian Public Life since 1788*, Australian Catholic Historical Society, Strathfield New South Wales, 2009, pp 41-55.
- Frost, W. & Laing, J., *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict*, Routledge, London 2013.
- Gabaccia, D., *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1998.
- Grignon, C., 'Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology', in Scholliers, P. (ed.), *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* Berg, Oxford, 2001, pp 22-33.
- Haebich, A., *Broken Circles. Fragmenting Indigenous Australian Lives 1800-2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 2000.

- Haebich, A., 'Retro-Assimilation' in *Griffith Review*, Volume 15, Number Autumn, 2007, pp 162-72.
- Haebich, A., *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2008.
- Hallinan, C.J. & Krotee, M.L., 'Conceptions of Nationalism and Citizenship among Non-Anglo-Celtic Soccer Clubs in an Australian City' in *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, Volume 17, Number 2, 1993, pp 125-33.
- Hammerton, A.J. & Thomson, A., *Ten Pound Poms Australia's Invisible Migrants*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005.
- Hanson, P., *Maiden Speech*, House of Representatives, Accessed 6 March 2016, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-15/pauline-hanson-maiden-speech-2016/7847136>.
- Harney, R.F., 'Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods', in Harney, R.F. (ed.), *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945*, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, 1985, pp 1-24.
- Hassam, A., 'From Heroes to Whingers: Changing Attitudes to British Migrants, 1947 to 1977' in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 51, Number 1, 2005, pp 79-93.
- Hassam, A., 'Hostels and Communal Feeding Are Not the British Way of Life' in *Food, Culture & Society*, Volume 12, Number 3, 2009, pp 313-34.
- Healy, C., *Forgetting Aborigines*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.
- Heney, H., 'The Fruits of Isolation' in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, pp 35-38.
- Heyes, T.H.E., 'Australia's "Stimulating Adventure"' in *The New Era in Home and School*, Volume 32, Number 2, 1951, pp 20-23.
- Hilliard, D., 'God in the Suburbs: The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 24, Number 97, 1991, pp 399-419.
- Hilliard, D., 'Popular Religion in Australia in the 1950s: A Study of Adelaide and Brisbane' in *The Journal of Religious History*, Volume 16, Number 2, 1988, pp 219-35.
- Hirschman, A., 'Melding the Public and Private Spheres: Taking Commensality Seriously' in *Critical Review*, Number 10, 1996, pp 533-50.
- Horn, R.V., 'The Meaning of Assimilation' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 4, 1952, pp 63-70.
- Horst van der, H., 'Living in a Reception Centre: The Search for Home in an Institutional Setting' in *Housing, Theory and Society*, Volume 21, Number 1, 2004, pp 36-46.
- Horton, J., 'Rewriting Political History: Letters from Aboriginal People in Victoria, 1886-1919' in *History Australia*, Volume 9, Number 2, 2012, pp 157-81.

- Howe, R. & Swain, S., 'Saving the Child and Punishing the Mother: Single Mothers and the State 1912–1942' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 17, Number 37, 1993, pp 31-46.
- Hughes, A., 'The Jewish Community', in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., O'Hara, J., & Weatherburn, H., (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp 103-15.
- Hughson, J., 'Football, Folk Dancing and Fascism: Diversity and Difference in Multicultural Australia' in *ANZJS*, Volume 33, Number 2, 1997, pp 167-86.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home. Report of the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 1997.
- Immigration Nation – Part 2, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJALDRPoIc>, accessed June 2016.
- Inverbrackie Good Neighbour Council, *Inverbrackie Good Neighbour Council*, Accessed 16 March 2011, www.inverbrackiegnc.org.au.
- Interview with Christa Braun, Interviewer Donna Kleiss, 28/11/91 and 30/6/92, OH24 -1, John Oxley Library Queensland.
- James, A., Curtis, P., & Ellis, K., 'Negotiating Family, Negotiating Food: Children as Family Participants', in James, A., Kjörholt, A.T., & Vebjørn, T., (eds.), *Children, Food and Identity in Everyday Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 2009, pp 35-51.
- Janowski, M., 'Food in Traumatic Times: Women, Foodways and 'Polishness' During a Wartime 'Odyssey'' in *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, Number 20, 2012, pp 326-49.
- Janowski, M., 'Introduction: Consuming Memories of Home in Constructing the Present and Imagining the Future' in *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, Volume 20, Number 3-4, 2012, pp 175-86.
- Jenkins, P.A.B., *Australian Political Elites and Citizenship Education for 'New Australians' 1945-1960*, University of Sydney, 2001.
- Johnson, C.M., Sharkey, J.R., *et al.*, 'It's Who I Am and What We Eat. Mothers' Food-Related Identities in Family Food Choice' in *Appetite*, Volume 57, 2011, pp 220–28.
- Jordens, A.-M., 'Migrant Supporting Mothers and the State 1948-54' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 17, Number 37, 1993, pp 47-57.
- Jordens, A.-M., *Redefining Australians Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1995.
- Jordens, A.-M., *Alien to Citizen: Settling Migrants in Australia, 1945-75*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1997.
- Julier, A., *Eating Together: Food, Friendship and Inequality*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 2013.
- Jupp, J., *Arrivals and Departures*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1966.

- Jupp, J., 'Immigration: Some Recent Perspectives' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 24, Number 95, 1990, pp 285-91.
- Jupp, J., *Immigration*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Victoria, 1998.
- Jupp, J. (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, Cambridge University Press, Australia, 2001.
- Jupp, J., *From White Australia to Woomera: The History of Australian Immigration*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.
- Keating, C., *A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta, New South Wales, 1939-1960*, Uri Windt, Burwood New South Wales, 1997.
- Kell, P., *Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*, Pluto Press, Annandale, NSW, 2000.
- Kenny, P., Higgins, D., Soloff, C., & Sweid, R., *Past Adoption Experiences: National Research Study on the Service Response to Past Adoption Practices*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2012.
- Kerner, S. & Chou, C., 'Introduction', in Kerner, S., Chou, C., & Warmind, M., (eds.), *Commensality: From Everyday Food to Feast*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2015, pp 1-12.
- Kershen, A.J., 'Introduction: Food in the Migrant Experience', in Kershen, A.J. (ed.), *Food in the Migrant Experience*, Ashgate, Hampshire England, 2002, pp 1-16.
- Kevin, C., & Agutter, K., 'The 'Unwanted' and 'Non-Compliant': 'Unsupported Mothers' as 'Failures' and Agents in Australia's Migrant Holding Centres' in *The History of the Family*, Forthcoming, DOI 10.1080/1081602X.2017.1302891, 2017.
- King, R. & Wood, N., 'Media and Migration an Overview', in King, R. & Wood, N. (eds.), *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp 1-22.
- Knorr, J. & Nunes, A., 'Introduction', in Jacqueline, K. (ed.), *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, Transcript, Verlag, 2005, pp 9-22.
- Kokegei, K., *Australian Immigration and Migrant Assimilation 1945-1960*, PhD Thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 2012.
- Krouwel, A., Boonstra, N., Duyvendak, J.W., & Veldboer, L., 'A Good Sport? Research into the Capacity of Recreational Sport to Integrate Dutch Minorities' in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Volume 41, Number 2, 2006, pp 165-80.
- Kunek, S., 'Greek Female Migration in the Post World War II Period in Australia' in *Australian Studies*, Volume 2, 1989, pp 36-58.
- Kunek, S., 'Brides, Wives, and Single Women: Gender and Immigration' in *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, Volume 8, 1993, pp 82-113.
- Kunz, E.F., *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*, Australian National University Press, Sydney, 1988.

- Kuo, L., *Migration Documentary Films in Post-War Australia*, Cambria Press, New York, 2010.
- Lack, J. & Templeton, J., *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration since 1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995.
- Lenette, C., 'I Am a Widow, Mother and Refugee': Narratives of Two Refugee Widows Resettled in Australia' in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 27, Number 3, 2013, pp 403-21.
- Lewins, F.W., *The Myth of the Universal Church: Catholic Migrants in Australia*, Australia National University, Canberra, 1978.
- London, J., *The Golden Age*, Vintage, Sydney, 2014.
- Lopez, M., *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2000.
- Lowe, D., '1954: The Queen and Australia in the World' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 19, Number 46, 1995, pp 1-10.
- Macintyre, S., *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Newsouth, Sydney, 2015.
- Manfredi, S. & Newton, J., *Fresh from Italy*, Hodder and Stoughton, Rydalmere, New South Wales, 1993.
- Markus, A. & Taft, M., 'Postwar Immigration and Assimilation: A Reconceptualisation' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2015, pp 234-51.
- Markus, A., Jupp, J., & McDonald, P., *Australia's Immigration Revolution*, Allen & Unwin, New South Wales, 2009.
- Markus, A., 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9: The Displaced Persons Program' in *Labour History*, Number 47, 1984, pp 73-90.
- Marsden, S., *A History of Woodville*, Corporation of the City of Woodville, Woodville South Australia, 1977.
- Martin, J.I., *Community and Identity: Refugee Groups in Adelaide*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1972.
- Martin, J.I., *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1965.
- Martin, J.I., *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978.
- Martin, S., *New Life New Language: The History of the Adult Migrant English Program*, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney, 2002.
- Mc Master, D., *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Victoria, 2001.
- McIntosh, A. & Zey, M., 'Women as Gatekeepers', in Counihan, C.M. & Kaplan, S.L. (eds.), *Food and Gender: Identity and Power*, Routledge, New York, 2005.

- McKenna, M., 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference', in Schreuder, D.M. & Ward, S. (eds.), *Australia's Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp 261-87.
- McNicoll, D., 'Entertainment', in Ziegler, O.L. (ed.), *Official Commemorative Book: Jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney NSW, 1951, pp 62-65.
- Mellor, E.J., *Stepping Stones: The Development of Early Childhood Services in Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1990.
- Messer, E., 'Food Definitions and Boundaries: Eating Constraints and Human Identities', in MacClancy, J., Henry, J., & Macbeth, H., (eds.), *Consuming the Inedible: Neglected Dimensions of Food Choice* Berghahn Books, New York, 2007, pp 53-65.
- Milanov, K., 'Towards the Assimilation of New Australians' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 23, Number 2, 1951, pp 71-78.
- Mitchell, J., 'Maypoles and Electric Fences: Centenary Celebrations in 1950s Victoria' in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, June, 2010, pp 80-97.
- Moran, A., 'Nation Building: The Post 1953' in *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1988, pp 57-79. -War Documentar
- Moran, A., *Projecting Australia: Government Film since 1945*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1991.
- Morris, E., 'Forty Years On: Australia and the Queen, 1954' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Volume 18, Number 40, 1994, pp 1-13.
- Morris, S., *Uranquinty Remembers: A Migrant Experience 1848-1952*, Uranquinty Progress Association, Wagga Wagga, 2001.
- Mosely, P., *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer: A History 1950-1990*, Australian Sports Commission, Belconnen, ACT, 1995.
- Mosley, P., Cashman, R., O'Hara, J., & Weatherburn, H., (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997.
- Mosley, P., 'The Italian Community', in Mosley, P., Cashman, R., O'Hara, J., & Weatherburn, H., (eds.), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp 88-102.
- Murphy, C. (ed.), *Boat Load of Dreams: Journeys by European Immigrant Workers 1947-1994*, United Trades and Labour Council, Adelaide, 1994.
- Murphy, H.B.M., 'Assimilating the Displaced Person' in *The Australian Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 1, 1952, pp 46-59.
- Murphy, H.B.M., 'The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia' in *Population Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3, 1952, pp 179-206.
- Murphy, J., *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000.

- Neumann, K., *Refuge Australia: Australia's Humanitarian Record*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2004.
- Neumann, K., *Across the Seas: Australia's Response to Refugees – a History*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2015.
- O'Hanlon, S., 'Full Board and Lodging: Hostels for Migrant Workers in Early Postwar Melbourne' in *History Australia*, Volume 2, Number 3, 2003, pp 1 - 15.
- Oppenheimer, M., *Volunteering: Why We Can't Survive without It*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.
- Oppenheimer, M., *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of the Australian Red Cross 1914-2014*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2014.
- Panich, C., *Sanctuary? Remembering Postwar Immigration*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.
- Pascual-de-Sans, A., 'Sense of Place and Migration Histories Idiotype and Idiotope' in *Area*, Volume 36, Number 4, 2004, pp 348-57.
- Pendred, G.E., 'Pre-School Centres in Australia', *Review of Education in Australia 1955-1962*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Hawthorn, Victoria, 1964, pp 387-416.
- Pennay, B., *Food at Bonegilla*, Parklands Albury Wodonga, Wodonga, Victoria, 2007.
- Pennay, B., *So Much Sky: Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre 1947-1971*, Migration Heritage Centre, Albury-Wodonga, Australia, 2008.
- Pennay, B., *The Young at Bonegilla: Receiving Young Immigrants at Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre, 1947-1971*, Parklands Albury-Wodonga, 2010.
- Pennay, B., 'Remembering Bonegilla's Refugee Riot ' in *Eureka Street*, Volume 21, Number 14, 2011, pp 60-61.
- Pennay, B., '‘But No One Can Say He Was Hungry’ Memories and Representations of Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre' in *History Australia*, Volume 9, Number 1, 2012, pp 43-63.
- Pennay, B., *Benalla Migrant Camp: A Difficult Heritage*, Benalla Migrant Camp Inc., Benalla, 2015.
- Pennay, B., 'Remembering Benalla Migrant Camp' in *The History of the Family*, Volume <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2016.1265573>, 2017.
- Perera, S., 'Whiteness and Its Discontents: Notes on Politics, Gender, Sex and Food in the Year of Hanson' in *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Volume 20, Number 2, 1999, pp 183-98.
- Persian, J., 'Bonegilla: A Failed Narrative' in *History Australia*, Volume 9, Number 1, 2012, pp 64-83.
- Persian, J., 'Chifley Liked Them Blond': DP Immigrants for Australia' in *History Australia*, Volume 12, Number 2, 2015, pp 80-101.

- Persian, J., *Displaced Persons (1947-1952): Representations, Memory and Commemoration*, PhD Thesis, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, University of Sydney, 2011.
- Peters, N., Bush, F., & Gregory, J., *Graylands & Swanbourne Migrant Reception Centres*, Centre for Western Australian History, Perth, 1996.
- Pooley, J., 'Ethnic Soccer Clubs in Milwaukee: A Study of Assimilation', in Hart, M. (ed.), *Sport in the Socio-Cultural Process*, William Brown, Dunuque, USA, 1976, pp 475-92.
- Popenhagen, L., *Australian Lithuanians*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2012.
- Portelli, A., 'What Makes Oral History Different', in Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2006, pp 46-57.
- Postiglione, N., 'It Was Just Horrible': The Food Experience of Immigrants in 1950s Australia' in *History Australia*, Volume 7, Number 1, 21 March 2012, 2010, pp 9.1 - 9.16.
- Prenzler, T., 'Recent Writing on the History of Religion in Australia: A Critique' in *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, Volume 41, 1995, pp 139-56.
- Price, C., 'Immigration and Group Settlement', in Borrie, W.D. (ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, UNESCO, Paris, 1959, pp 267-88.
- Price, C., 'Review: Arrivals and Departures by James Jupp' in *The International Migration Review*, Volume 2, Number 1, 1967, pp 55-57.
- Price, C., 'Immigrants', in Davies, A.F. & Encel, S. (eds.), *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970, pp 180-99.
- Punch, S., McIntosh, I., & Emond, R., 'Food and Relationships: Children's Experiences in Residential Care', in James, A., Kjørholt, A.T., & Vebjørn, T., (eds.), *Children, Food and Identity in Everyday Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 2009, pp 149-71.
- Raman, P., 'Me in Place, and the Place in Me' in *Food, Culture & Society*, Volume 14, Number 2, 2011, pp 165-80.
- Raviv, Y., *Falafel Nation: Cuisine and the Making of National Identity in Israel*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2015.
- Ribeche, R., *Just "a Handshake and a Cup of Tea"?: The Good Neighbour Movement in Victoria 1950-1959*, Masters Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986.
- Richards, E., *Destination Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008.
- Rivett, R., 'The Monarchy and the Migrant', in Dutton, G. (ed.), *Australia and the Monarchy: A Symposium*, Sun Books, Melbourne, Australia, 1966, pp 62-85.
- Rowe, A.E., 'Mint Grows through the Cracks in the Foundation: Food Practices of the Assimilated Lebanese Diaspora in New England (USA)' in *Food and*

- Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, Number 20, 2012, pp 211-32.
- Russell, L., 'Dirty Domestic and Worse Cooks': Aboriginal Women's Agency and Domestic Frontiers, Southern Australia, 1800-1850' in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Volume 28, Number 1/2, 2007, pp 18-46.
- Sargent, C.F. & Larchanché-Kim, S., 'Liminal Lives: Immigration Status, Gender and the Construction of Identities Among Malian Migrants in Paris' in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 50, Number 1, 2006, pp 9-26
- Scully, A. (ed.), *Memories of Mayfield*, Mayfield Chamber of Commerce, Mayfield, 1997.
- Sestokas, J., *Welcome to Little Europe: Displaced Persons and the North Camp*, Little Chicken Publishing Co., Sale, Victoria, 2010.
- Sherington, G., *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1988*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980.
- Simic, Z., 'Bachelors of Misery and Proxy Brides: Marriage, Migration and Assimilation, 1947-1973' in *History Australia*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2014, pp 149-74.
- Sluga, G., *Bonegilla 'a Place of No Hope'*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1988.
- Smyth, T.M., *Economic Aspects of Film Distribution and Exhibition in Australia*, Masters Thesis, School of Economics, University of New South Wales, 1976.
- Sobal, J., Bove, C.F., *et al.*, 'Commensal Careers at Entry into Marriage: Establishing Commensal Units and Managing Commensal Circles ' in *The Sociological Review*, Volume 50, Number 3, 2002, pp 378-97.
- Spaaij, R., 'Refugee Youth, Belonging and Community Sport' in *Leisure Studies*, Volume 34, Number 3, 2015, pp 303-18.
- Spearritt, P., 'Child Care and Kindergartens in Australia, 1890-1975', in Langford, P. & Sebastian, P. (eds.), *Early Childhood Education and Care in Australia*, Australia International Press & Publications, Kew, Victoria, 1979, pp 10-38.
- Spearritt, P., 'Royal Progress: The Queen and Her Australian Subjects', in Goldberg, S.L. & Smith, F.B. (eds.), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp 138-57.
- Spillman, L., *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.
- Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Releasing the Past : Adoption Practices, 1950-1998 : Final Report* New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council, Sydney, N.S.W., 2000.
- Stanner, W.E.H., 'The Australian Way of Life', in Aughterson, W.V. (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1953, pp 3-14.

- Stodolska, M. & Alexandris, K., 'The Role of Recreational Sport in the Adaptation of First Generation Immigrants in the United States' in *Journal of Leisure Research*, Volume 36, Number 3, 2004, pp 379-413.
- Stowers, S.L., 'Gastronomic Nostalgia: Salvadoran Immigrants' Cravings for Their Ideal Meal' in *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, Volume 51, Number 5, 2012, pp 374-93.
- Stuart, M., *The Poor Relation*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic, 2010.
- Swain, S., *History of Child Protection Legislation*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014.
- Synan, A., *We Came with Nothing: Story of the West Sale Migrant Holding Centre*, Lookups Research, Sale, Victoria, 2002.
- Taft, R., *From Stranger to Citizen: A Survey of Studies of Immigrant Assimilation in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands Western Australia, 1965.
- Taft, R., 'The Shared Frame of Reference Concept Applied to the Assimilation of Immigrants' in *Human Relations*, Volume 6, 1953, pp 45-55.
- Tavan, G., '“Good Neighbours”: Community Organisations, Migrant Assimilation and Australian Society and Culture, 1950-1961' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 27, Number 109, 1997, pp 77-89.
- Tavan, G., 'Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program' in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 58, Number 2, 2012, pp 203-20.
- Taylor, T. & Toohey, K., 'Ethnic Barriers to Sports Participation' in *Australian Parks and Recreation*, Volume 31, Number 2, 1995, pp 32-36.
- The Commonwealth Office of Education, *I Can Read English*, FH Johnston Publishing, Sydney, 1950.
- Thomassen, B., 'Revisiting Liminality: The Danger of Empty Spaces', in Andrews, H. & Roberts, L. (eds.), *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between*, Routledge, Abingdon UK, 2012, pp 21-35.
- Tomsic, M., 'Women's Memories of Cinema-Going: More Than 'the Only Thing Left to Do' in Victoria's Western District' in *History Australia*, Volume 2, Number 1, 2005, pp 6.1-6.12.
- Törökfalvy, E., *Letters of Heartache and Hope: A Story of Emigration after World War II*, Self published, Hastings, Victoria, 1995.
- Turkiewicz, S. (Director), Freedman, R. (Producer), 'Once My Mother', Change Focus Media (Distributor), Australia, 2013.
- Turner, V., *Dramas. Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1974.
- Turner, V.W., *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine, New York, 1969.

- Vallianatos, H. & Raine, K., 'Consuming Food and Constructing Identities among Arabic and South Asian Immigrant Women' in *Food, Culture & Society*, Number 11, 2008, pp 355-73.
- van Gennep, A. *The Rites of Passage*, Routledge, London, 2013.
- Vasta, E., 'Multiculturalism and Ethnic Identity: The Relationship between Racism and Resistance' in *Journal of Sociology*, Volume 29, Number 2, 1993, pp 209-25.
- Victorian Immigration Museum (ed.), *A Worthwhile Enterprise: The Migrant Hostel in Springvale*, Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 2008.
- White, R., 'The Australian Way of Life' in *Historical Studies*, Volume 18, Number 73, 1979, pp 528-45.
- White, R., *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1981.
- Williams, D., *Australian Post-War Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors*, Intellect, Bristol UK, 2008.
- Wills, S., 'When Good Neighbours Become Good Friends: The Australian Embrace of Its Millionth Migrant' in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 36, Number 124, 2004, pp 332-54.
- Wills, S., 'Between the Hostel and the Detention Centre: Possible Trajectories of Migrant Pain and Shame in Australia', in Logan, W. & Reeves, K. (eds.), *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'*, Routledge, London, 2009, pp 263-80.
- Wilton, J. & Bosworth, R., *Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post-War Migrant Experience*, Penguin Australia, Ringwood, Victoria, 1984.
- Wood, N. & King, R., 'Media and Migration: An Overview', in Wood, N. & King, R. (eds.), *Media and Migration: Conditions of Mobility and Difference*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp 1-22.
- Young, J., 'Migration, Ethnicity and Privilege: An Exploration of Representation and Accountability' in *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, Volume 23, Number 1, 2010, pp 101-13.
- Zahra, T., 'Lost Children: Displacement, Family, and Nation in Postwar Europe' in *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 81, 2009, pp 45-86.
- Zubrzycki, J., *Settlers of the Latrobe Valley: A Sociological Study of Immigrants in the Brown Coal Industry in Australia*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1964.
- Zubrzycki, J. 'Arthur Calwell and the Origin of Post-War Immigration ', in, *Migration Division Seminar, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs*, Canberra, 1995.
- Zucchi, J., *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity 1875-1935*, McGill-Queens University Press, Canada, 1988.

Section 7 : Appendices

The following two articles do not form part of the thesis submitted for examination but are referenced in the body of the thesis. They are included in this appendix for easy reference by the reader.

Appendix 1. Understanding Ethnic Residential Cluster Formation: new perspectives from South Australia's migrant hostels

Understanding Ethnic Residential Cluster Formation: new perspectives from South Australia's migrant hostels

Karen Agutter and Rachel A. Ankeny 

Department of History, School of Humanities, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

Throughout Australia's history, successive governments have lamented the clustering of non-English-speaking migrants in 'ethnic enclaves' or 'ghettos'. From the early Chinatowns of the 1800s till today, urban concentrations of ethnic groups have raised concerns and fears in local populations and authorities alike, despite decades of international research which suggests that ethnic residential clusters actually aid long-term assimilation and adjustment. Many of the ethnic residential clusters in contemporary Australia have been claimed to be a direct consequence of the migrant hostels and reception centres which operated between 1948 and the 1990s. This paper traces migrant settlement patterns in South Australia in rich detail, revealing the complexities of lived experiences that shape migrant settlement decisions. Against the background of public and scholarly debates over 'ethnic enclaves', and drawing on quantitative and qualitative historical research on the lived experiences of former hostel migrants, it analyses how migrant hostels and reception centres contributed to the settlement experiences of diverse migrants. We conclude that migrant hostels were just one among various factors that led to the growth and maintenance of ethnic residential clusters.

KEYWORDS

Ghettos; ethnic enclaves; migrant hostels; Australian immigration; migration policy; South Australia; community formation

Introduction

Hostels were an essential component of Australia's migrant intake for over 40 years, from 1948 to the mid-1990s. We use the term 'hostels' generically to refer to all forms of communal State and Commonwealth-funded accommodation for migrants, covering reception and training centres, workers' hostels, and holding centres as well as institutions formally called hostels. Hostels provided not only relatively low- or no-cost temporary accommodation for refugees and assisted migrants but also a variety of services that were essential to the host nation's attempts to assimilate, integrate, and acclimatise new arrivals. Past studies have claimed that the hostels of the 1970s and 1980s, and particularly those used to house Vietnamese refugees, directly contributed to the formation of ethnic residential clusters, or even enclaves and ghettos (e.g. Jupp, McRobbie, and York 1990; Birrell 1993).

CONTACT Rachel A. Ankeny  rachel.ankeney@adelaide.edu.au  Department of History, School of Humanities, University of Adelaide, 4th floor Napier Building, Adelaide, SA 5005 Australia

© 2016 Geographical Society of New South Wales Inc.

In this paper, we first briefly consider the concept of ghettos and ethnic enclaves as applied, in other immigrant societies, to large and segregated ethnic residential concentrations. We discuss evidence that such concentrations did not really occur in Australia in the same way despite frequent popular use of this terminology. Nevertheless, there have been and continue to be residential clusters of ethnic populations in Australia that are worthy of scholarly exploration.¹ We contend that it is critical to continue to research segregation and clustering because of the effects such patterns may have on migrants. Also, it is critical to investigate these types of concentrations because they continue to be seen as problematic in the wider population and popular media, and these perceptions often can become 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. As noted by scholars of migration, 'concentration neighbourhoods [i.e. neighbourhoods with large populations from the same ethnic group] can turn into breeding grounds for misery because they are so perceived' (Kempen and Özüekren 1998, 1634). In other words, communities can develop in problematic ways if those around them have low and negative expectations and fail to provide support for their positive growth.

We do not seek to cover old ground by undertaking a demographic analysis of ethnic residential clusters. Rather, we seek to understand the factors surrounding immigration policy and practices that may have contributed to (or worked against) the formation of such clusters, drawing on our findings about the operation of the hostel system in South Australia based on an Australian Research Council funded Linkage Project 'Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants'. We consider a range of factors including the location of migrant hostels, government policies around assimilation and placement of migrants into holding centres and work camps, and the impacts of the external community and the internal migrant community. We show that the hostel system alone did not create ethnic residential clusters: in fact no single factor alone can explain the establishment or growth of these clusters. Rather, a combination of factors must be considered when seeking to understand migrant settlement patterns.

Background: ghettos and enclaves

Across the world, particularly in nations of immigration, researchers from various disciplines have long sought to understand the formation, maintenance and significance of ethnic enclaves and ghettos. They have tended to explore these issues in the context of specific host nations and individual cities² and with reference to particular ethnic origins.³ There has always been strong political, public, and media interest in ethnic settlements and concentrations, more often than not arising from the fear and apprehension of migrants thought to be notably different from the majority population of the respective host nation. So what is a ghetto, and how is a ghetto different from an ethnic enclave? Does either exist in any recognisable form in Australia?

Historically the word 'ghetto' has been associated primarily with European Jewry,⁴ though today we tend to equate the term with a slum area occupied primarily by a minority group; it is the pejorative associations with the word that tend to arise in popular discourse. By contrast, the term 'ethnic enclave' is used to describe a geographic area that has a high ethnic concentration both living and conducting cultural and economic activity within its boundary (Abrahamson 1996). Unlike a ghetto, an enclave is generally

not considered to be a slum, although enclaves continue to have negative associations in Australia.

Social commentator Bernard Salt recently asked: 'At what point in a suburb's development does the presence of a demographic group stop being cultural diversity and start being an enclave?' (Salt 2010, n.p.). Scholars have attempted to place a numerical figure on the proportion of a particular ethnic population needed in a given area for it to create segregation (in terms of the representation of non-Australian birthplace groups), and thus to be considered a ghetto or an enclave. Generally, the figure is considered to be around 90 per cent to be a ghetto (Peach 1996) and 30 per cent to be an enclave (Dunn 1998). However, such simplistic definitions are problematic where there are multiple ethnicities living within an area, where the dominant ethnicity changes over time (see, for example, McKenzie 1999 on the Melbourne suburb of Footscray), or where the particular ethnic concentration is considered to be acceptable to the host society as a whole, as with heavy concentrations of British migrants (Ang et al. 2006; Salt 2010, n.p.) in Elizabeth to the north of Adelaide, or Burns Beach north of Perth (one of the largest ethnic residential clusters in Australia).⁵ As Jupp, McRobbie, and York (1990, 1) explain, 'white English-speakers have always been excluded from any discussion of ghettos or enclaves even when they have numerically dominated large suburban areas', as policy and public opinion have been concerned only with those from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

In Australia, there is evidence of ethnic residential clustering, most notably, for example, in the so-called 'little Italies', 'Chinatowns', and so on. However, the general consensus is that Australia has not experienced the formation of ghettos and major ethnic enclaves (e.g. Burnley 1999; Ang et al. 2002; cf. Poulsen, Johnston, and Forrest 2002, 2004) as commonly found in the USA, Britain and Canada. The lack of ghetto formation in Australia has been attributed largely to a series of specific policies that controlled and severely limited non-Anglo-Saxon arrivals, including pre-Federation anti-Chinese legislation on poll and landing taxes, and entry controls implemented as a result of the 1901 *Immigration Restriction Act* (the so-called 'White Australia' policy). By contrast, when mass migration occurred in the post-Second World War period as Australia sought to increase its population and grow its economic base, European refugees and assisted-migrant arrivals were discouraged from forming ethnic clusters through a strict policy of assimilation and mandatory 2-year work contracts. The latter generally allowed authorities to disperse these 'New Australians' across the country.⁶ However, the dismantling of the White Australia policy and the subsequent adoption of an official policy of multiculturalism in 1972 allowed for a much wider range of non-European-born arrivals to enter Australia. As refugees from Southeast Asia were joined by refugees and migrants from other parts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, many Australians were, and continue to be, outspoken about their fears of, and opposition towards, ethnic enclave and ghetto formation. The threat of ethnic concentrations has been used frequently in wider debates on Australian multicultural policy, including in historian Blainey's (1988) statement that Australia must break down the walls of the ghettos, and the infamous claims of the right-wing politician Pauline Hanson⁷ (1996, n.p.) that the nation was being swamped by Asians who 'have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate'. Although history reveals that ethnic residential clusters are temporary phenomena, that in fact play important roles in the process of assimilation and integration of migrants into the wider community, isolated events such as the Cronulla riots⁸ serve to

stimulate ongoing fears in the wider community about concentrations of migrants and to prompt scholarly research.

Australian studies of ethnic residential segregation have relied heavily on models formulated overseas. However, our immigration patterns and experiences, particularly post-Second World War, have been unique for a number of reasons. Important differences include control of the movement of migrants through policies such as work contracts, careful overseas selection of future citizens, recent use of detention centres and offshore processing, and, as highlighted in this paper, the use of hostels as initial accommodation for new arrivals. If we cannot simply use the models and analysis conducted in other nations, then what approach should we take?

Australian studies of ethnic residential concentration and community diversity have relied primarily upon census data and resultant mapping of the residential distribution of immigrant groups to indicate their separation and segregation from the host society (e.g. Poulsen, Johnston, and Forrest 2002). As Grimes (1993, 104–105) argues, these ‘mapping exercises are a useful first step’ but they also have their limitations as they may ‘hide significant heterogeneity in immigrant populations’. There are dangers in making assumptions about ethnic groups based on birthplace statistics as provided in census tables. For example, many post-War displaced children who came to Australia were born in Germany and yet their familial ethnicities were not German. Frequent movement prior to immigration is common among the displaced and refugee arrivals who are prominent in Australia’s immigration history, and similar patterns continue today particularly among refugees from the Middle East and parts of Asia. As Burnley (1994) has argued, there is a need for a more extensive analysis of immigrant groups. Furthermore, questions regarding ethnicity/ancestry and birthplace within the Australian census have changed over time, making longitudinal and comparative study problematic.⁹ Hence, given these Australian census data limitations and the aforementioned unique immigration patterns and policies associated with the movement of migrants within Australia, we contend that a new approach to research on the formation of ethnic residential clusters is required.

Methods

The Hostel Stories project traces the lived experiences of thousands of migrants who passed through South Australia’s 14 government-operated migrant hostels and reception centres and various work camps from the late 1940s to the 1990s. Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of Adelaide’s Human Research Ethics Committee (approval H-2012–120). Participant recruitment for the project typically begins with a registration of interest (available via the project in several languages, and paper and electronic forms) asking for basic information on migrants’ backgrounds and hostel experiences. As of July 2016, over 600 registrations of interest had been received from former hostel residents; these allow us to gather qualitative data including migrants’ initial places of residence and type of accommodation upon departure from the hostel, and any free-hand comments on these issues.

Based on sampling from the registrations of interest to represent diverse countries of origin, time and age of migration, reasons for migration, and hostels of residence, approximately 95 oral history interviews have been performed. Interviews are conducted using a

set script with open-ended questions, and including questions about how migrants decided where to live upon leaving the hostel.

Among the archival materials sourced (which cover all of the government-operated hostels in South Australia throughout the time period in which they operated and numerous work camps), the hostel arrival and departure registers and accommodation records¹⁰ have proven to be extremely useful sources of information. They provide insights into the initial movement of migrants upon leaving the hostels, which is a critical stage in migrants' lives and settlement in Australia, as they note the first destination address. Data from these records, in combination with other archival sources including alien registration documents¹¹ and applications for naturalisation and the qualitative data described above, have allowed us to establish settlement patterns over time from first departure from the hostel, thus providing more nuanced insights into larger-scale migrant settlement patterns and factors impacting choice of locale and type of housing than can be generated through use of census data.

Factors related to ethnic residential cluster formation

Studies of Vietnamese settlement frequently claim that the hostels which housed these refugees and migrants in the 1970s and 1980s were directly connected with the development of Vietnamese residential concentrations in Australian cities. Jupp, McRobbie, and York (1990, 79) contend that 'the use of hostels was the most important single factor in creating such concentrations'. However, our evidence from the Hostel Stories project is that there were numerous factors that contributed to settlement patterns following hostel residence. In the remainder of this paper, we analyse a number of these, considering the extent to which each may have contributed to the formation of ethnic residential concentrations in South Australia.

Hostel location and length of stay

Salt, writing in *The Australian* in 2010, observed that:

The largest group of any non-Australian-born population in Australia is to be found in Sydney's southwestern suburb of Cabramatta. Here, Vietnamese comprise 27 per cent of the population in postcode 2166. That's because, when the Vietnamese arrived en masse just 25 years ago they were channelled through migrant hostels at Springvale in Melbourne and Villawood in Sydney. On moving into the general community they gravitated to nearby Cabramatta and to Springvale, where they are 21 per cent of the population in the local post-code district. (Salt 2010, n.p.)

Implicit in this statement is an argument that hostels can act as a 'seed' for the growth of ethnic residential clustering in the surrounding community. However, studies of earlier migrant arrivals and settlement do not support strong links between the hostels and migrant clustering upon settlement. Jupp, McRobbie, and York (1990, 30) claim that clustering did not occur in the earlier periods (late 1940s and 1950s) because migrants did not stay in hostels long enough to establish local links; furthermore, hostels 'had been located in remote rural areas'. By the 1970s and 1980s (the period when Vietnamese refugees arrived in Australia), hostels were 'located in the suburbs of metropolitan centres', contributing to the formation of residential concentrations. Testing this hypothesis against the

South Australian hostel system over many decades, we can find examples that both support and contradict this argument.

While it is certainly true that displaced persons (DPs) and early assisted migrants (under the requirements of the mandatory 2-year work contracts) were often moved out of the hostel system quickly to be sent to work in remote, rural, and sometimes urban locales while their dependent wives and children were housed in hostels around the country, other assisted migrants and family groups in particular often stayed in hostels for long periods of time. Those who had long stays created considerable anxiety for the Commonwealth Government, leading to rule changes in 1958 and evictions of migrants who had been in hostels for over 5 years.¹² Based on our research, while many earlier arrivals (those who arrived in the late 1940s and 1950s) were dispersed across the country, many others stayed in hostels, some by circumstance and some by choice, for many years and actually far longer than those of Vietnamese origin who migrated in the later period (arriving in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s). Thus length of stay was on average much longer in the earlier periods during which clustering did not typically occur, as compared to later periods which are often associated with clustering.

With respect to Jupp, McRobbie, and York's (1990) claim about the remoteness of early hostels in locales that were less attractive to migrants, we note that in South Australia there was a mixture of urban and suburban locations. Many hostels were purposely located near transport,¹³ so that establishments such as that at Smithfield (30 km from the Adelaide Central Business District (CBD)) were not so distant as to prevent men from travelling to work in Adelaide suburbs while living at the hostel. There were also a number of hostels located in outer suburbs and in newly developing areas on the fringes of metropolitan Adelaide, including Rosewater (14 km from the CBD) and Semaphore (22 km from the CBD) which were not subsequently correlated with significant ethnic residential concentrations. One reason for this, at least in the South Australian case, is that there was significant movement of people between hostels, and therefore migrants did not necessarily put down roots in the surrounding communities. Analysis of hostel arrival/departure registers confirms this ongoing movement between hostels. For example, when the Gawler Hostel closed after only 3 years of operation, residents were sent to Finsbury (later renamed Pennington) in the first instance and then, with the arrival of significant numbers of British migrants to that hostel, on to Glenelg Hostel.

Considering the applicability of the 'seed' effect as described above, although the Elder Park Hostel in the Adelaide CBD catered primarily for English migrants, the concentration of this migrant group occurred in the satellite suburb of Elizabeth some 30 km to the north of the city (due primarily to State and private housing schemes targeted specifically at migrants). In contrast, Finsbury (located 11 km from the Adelaide CBD), which was the largest and longest operating hostel in South Australia (1949–90s), housed numerous waves of migrants including DPs, assisted British and European migrants, and other refugees from Europe, Asia, and South America. Today, the community profile of the Pennington district indicates some notable clusters of ethnicities, including 16 per cent who claim Vietnamese ancestry, 13 per cent Italian, 6 per cent Greek and 6 per cent German, as well as 26 per cent Australian and 28 per cent English (City of Charles Sturt 2011, n.p.). This distribution could be considered to reflect the ethnic background of the migrants who passed through the hostel. However, it must be noted that the

concentrations of each ethnicity are still far below the numbers required to constitute an enclave using the international standards discussed previously, even for the Vietnamese, the ethnic group most closely associated with Pennington in the public imagination. Settlement patterns thus are much more complex than a simple theory of hostel proximity generating ethnic enclaves or residential clusters might suggest.

Availability of work and housing

The Finsbury/Pennington case may indicate that some migrants preferentially settled in the vicinity of the hostel; however, there were other factors at play in the residential decision-making process, most notably the availability of affordable housing and work, particularly for migrants who were largely working class (see also Zang and Hassan 1996). In the early years, the area around this hostel was rich in job prospects, providing easy access to large manufacturing companies such as General Motors Holden, Phillips, and Kelvinator. According to historian Marsden (1977, 228), by the early 1950s Finsbury housed ‘almost all the heavy industry (mostly engineering, automotive and “whitegoods”) the government had hoped to see established in South Australia’ and so the availability of jobs may well have been a significant contributor to patterns of migrant settlement. In contrast, several of our participants noted that in the 1970s and 1980s, when work was less readily available in the area surrounding Finsbury/Pennington, many Vietnamese and other refugees moved elsewhere in Adelaide or even interstate in search of better job opportunities. Thus job prospects often critically contributed to settlement decisions, which often were not well-correlated with hostel location.

Additional evidence of the association between housing and work can be found by tracking hostel residents through alien registration documents, where we found many instances of change of abode and of employment. For example, a Polish-born migrant and his wife arrived in Melbourne on 28 March 1950 and were sent initially to Finsbury Hostel. Between their arrival in 1950 and his naturalisation in Enfield (8 km from the hostel) in 1956 (National Archives Australia [NAA], D4878), the couple moved, apparently to be closer to his work. Under the 2-year work contract, he was employed at Faulding and Co. in Southwark (current-day Thebarton) and on leaving the hostel in September 1950 he and his wife moved to Allenby Gardens, just 3 km from this employer. On release from his 2-year contract, the couple moved between several homes as he changed jobs, having four addresses in as many years, including a few months in Lobethal (in the Adelaide Hills) while he was employed at the Onkaparinga Woollen Mills. While all of their moves, with the exception of Lobethal, were within a 10 km radius of the original hostel, they were also within easy commuting distance to his respective places of employment (NAA, D4881).

The influence of work availability on choice of residential location was evident in many of the oral histories conducted. A Lithuanian DP (JD, 26/2/15),¹⁴ having worked out his 2-year contract in railway camps across South Australia, was prompted to request a transfer to Adelaide because of the prospect of being part of the growing Lithuanian community. However, when seeking accommodation, proximity to his job at Mile End influenced his choice to lodge in an Australian household. A second Lithuanian-born DP (JV, 26/2/15) found rooms with an Australian man in Enfield because that location was near his work in

the cold storage facilities at Mile End. Although assisted by a fellow Lithuanian DP to find accommodation, an Estonian couple (LG, 26/2/15) ultimately settled in a room in a large house near Wakefield Street in Adelaide as it was near to the wife's work in a belt factory and the husband's as a mechanic. The hostel registers are also revealing on this point: at Gawler Hostel, out of 1231 departures, only 203 migrants/refugees settled in Gawler and surrounding towns. Despite there generally being enormous local support for them, most moved elsewhere probably as a consequence of the limited work opportunities. The large numbers of migrants who went to Woomera, Whyalla, and Renown Park (all of which had a large number of jobs) reveal availability of work as an obvious causal factor for choice of abode upon leaving a migrant hostel.

The importance of affordable housing for migrants was another key factor, and is particularly evident in the cases of those who lived at Glenelg Hostel. Examination of the arrival and departure registers for this centre reveals that very few families moved from the hostel to the surrounding area despite most of our participants describing its attractiveness given its proximity to the beach, easy transport to the city, and schools accustomed to educating migrant children. While their destinations were diverse, many moved north towards Finsbury. For example, a sampling taken from Glenelg Hostel registers during the month of July 1959¹⁵ shows that, aside from one family who returned to Austria, the remaining families moved to houses in Beverley, Croydon, and Prospect, all areas which offered lower housing costs and better work opportunities at that time. Evidence from our oral histories of these patterns includes the statement by a Polish-born DP (IGM, 7/5/15) who noted that the Ukrainians settled largely around Seaton and Seaton Park (in the western suburbs) 'because the land was cheap, they could buy the land, live on it in car crates until they actually built their own homes'. Similarly, an English family (ILD, 28/10/14) noted that ideally they would have stayed in Glenelg after their time there in the hostel but 'the cost of buying a house there was half as much again as the one that we bought in Fairview Park [a suburb to the northeast] so it was a matter of... we just couldn't afford to go where we really wanted to'. Similarly the Gawler Hostel registers reveal large numbers of departures to live in new and affordable areas such as Enfield.

Assimilation to multiculturalism: the impact on hostels and communities

From 1947 through to the 1960s, the official Commonwealth Government policy was one of assimilation, whereby new arrivals were actively encouraged to adopt the 'Australian way of life'¹⁶ and to disperse into the community. Newspaper reports from that time highlight the policy aims of assimilation, and the education and involvement of the wider host society:

Many of the new Australians are from non-English speaking lands. They need in the first place to learn something of the language, and it is pleasing to know that provision is being made for elementary instruction, and that some 20,000 are being taught. This is one of the aids which no one thought about in other decades, with the result that foreign immigrants were greatly frustrated and this led to their forming national groups apart from the general community. This is something far from desirable, especially as the numbers of foreign migrants are far greater than ever before. We must take action which will prevent the formation of national enclaves. (*Advocate* 1950, 4)

Members of the broader Australian community were actively encouraged to visit the hostels and under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Government funded and initiated Good Neighbour Movement, innumerable Australian organisations and individuals (including religious denominations and volunteer groups such as the YWCA, the CWA, the Girl Guides, and Boy Scouts, and service organisations including Rotary and Apex), entered the hostels in order to introduce new arrivals into the Australian way of life.

This emphasis on assimilation, and the fact that there were a large number of hostels geographically dispersed around the Adelaide metropolitan area, meant that ethnic residential concentrations were minimal during this period. Even over time, as ongoing arrangements with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), evolving assisted-passage agreements between Australia and various other countries, and the realities of shipping meant that hostels contained increasingly large numbers of migrants from the same ethnic groups, the focus on assimilation still restricted the formation of ethnic enclaves in the community.

By the 1970s, when significant numbers of Vietnamese migrants arrived, the official government policy had changed to multiculturalism, where retention of ethnic identity was not only tolerated but encouraged. At the same time, the numbers of migrant hostels had dramatically reduced (for example, in South Australia the number of hostels declined from 13 in the 1950s and 1960s to a single hostel, Pennington, by the mid-1970s) so that there was naturally a higher concentration of particular ethnic populations in those remaining hostels. The method of service provision for new arrivals also changed: groups of new arrivals now learned English and received social assistance through more specifically trained individuals often linked to, or situated within, the hostel itself, rather than 'well-intentioned' Anglo-Australian volunteers.¹⁷ Furthermore, new arrivals were now joining an Australian society composed of significant numbers of settled migrants. By 1981, 21 per cent of Australia's population was overseas-born, and 20 per cent of Australian-born children had a least one migrant parent, and these numbers would continue to increase (Collins 1992, 103–104). Many of these established migrants provided links for new arrivals into the wider community, acting in a similar way to the chain migration that had been occurring concurrently outside of the hostel system and stimulating the movement of new arrivals into existing and evolving ethnic residential clusters.

For those ethnic groups for whom there was little existing community in South Australia (such as those from South America), accommodation in large hostels like Pennington along with hundreds of other migrants from diverse ethnicities was particularly isolating, as noted by many of our interviewees. Although many of these migrants arrived in family groups, they often sought solace and support from each other in the hostel, which in this case provided a place for nascent ethnic group formation that would later flourish in the wider community and draw individuals of the same ethnic origins together.¹⁸ Thus changing policies helped to shape settlement patterns across the long period in which hostels existed in South Australia.

Other influencing factors

Oral histories gathered during the Hostel Stories project also provide evidence of other factors that influenced migrants' residential decision-making processes. As an example, consider a Czechoslovakian family who arrived in South Australia in 1972 and left

Pennington Hostel after approximately 3 months in residence to move to a rented flat in Brompton. While its proximity to the hostel was noted, the interviewee stated that the location of the school that the children had been attending was a key factor in the decision. She explained:

we got a newspaper and went around and had a look for a flat ... close to the city, not far from the hostel ... and close to Brompton School ... we could walk there. That's what we were looking for, especially the school, shops weren't too close, had to take bus to go shopping but school was walking distance which was good. (LC, 3/7/13)

Of course, on many occasions there was no single reason for migrants' place of settlement after leaving the hostel system, but rather a combination of influencing factors that then evolved with changing circumstances. This process is well illustrated by the testimony of an Italian assisted migrant who (along with her family) was housed at Pennington Hostel. Upon leaving the hostel, they moved to nearby Woodville to stay with an Italian family. A sampling of Italians from Pennington in 1973–74 supports this oral testimony about small-scale clustering around Woodville and Ottoway. When asked whether they chose this location because of the family being Italian or near to the hostel, our interviewee (BR, 1/5/13) replied it was because 'of my husband's work, he was working at Woodville ... it was closer'. However, she also explained that the area was affordable and housing was cheap. As the family became more established, the area gained additional appeal because of the growing Italian community: 'our church was there and so that was the first area we get familiar with'. The family eventually chose to settle at Aberfoyle Park 'close to the sea'.

Although many British migrants clustered in particular communities due to the availability of housing, notably in Elizabeth to the north of the Adelaide metropolitan area, others actively sought to resist joining these communities. For instance, following a stay at the Glenelg Hostel, a British interviewee recounted the thought processes that caused her to avoid these communities:

A number of years later I'd read about Elizabeth. One or two books, and I was dead determined I wasn't going to live there ... Elizabeth didn't appeal to me at all. And I'd read about long waiting lists for sporting clubs and that kind of thing and I was given some idea already about the distances between things. And I hadn't driven. My husband hadn't driven a car, he had a motorbike in England. No it didn't appeal to me at all ... the lady interviewing us for the housing trust she said, 'Because of your situation we could give you a house straight away in Elizabeth or Salisbury'. She looked at me and she said, 'There's all these sports clubs and there's all the facilities social, education'. 'No', I said, 'no'. We came all this way to be in a different culture. My kids had changed school three times in a year and I didn't come all this way to live with a bunch of Poms. (DB, 30/10/14)

Finally, the influence of the attitudes of the broader community on migrants' settlement decisions also requires consideration. One of the reasons that ethnic residential clusters form is as a result of discrimination: migrants find it difficult to settle elsewhere because of problems in locating housing and work, or even feeling welcome in other areas (Poulsen, Johnston, and Forrest 2004). As noted previously, in the early years of the hostel system, assimilation was the key policy and much effort was put into educating the broader Australian public about the need for these (predominantly) European migrants and their contributions to Australia's future. While Southern Europeans were less well tolerated than Western Europeans, the prejudices against them were nowhere

near as great as when the White Australia policy was abandoned and Asian and African migrants arrived in greater numbers. If we accept that ethnic residential clusters form in part as a reaction to discrimination, as well as serving as a 'base for action' in migrants' struggles against society in general (Boal 1978), it can be argued that they also form for community support. As Coughlan (2008, 12) concludes, Vietnamese refugees moved from the hostels to neighbouring suburbs and the networks and sense of community they formed enabled them to deal with the

traumatic experiences of refugee flight and their perceived loss of their homeland. Over the long-term, these early enclaves [*sic*] provided psychological and social environments which would permit the successful integration of Vietnamese-Australians into mainstream Australian society.

Thus staying close to the hostel may have been particularly important for refugees, especially given community attitudes at that time.

Conclusion

Viewing hostels as the single biggest contributor to development of ethnic residential clusters is far too simplistic an argument, as we have demonstrated. An analysis of many underlying factors is important to develop an understanding of where, how, and why ethnic concentrations occur in communities. We have shown that the mere presence of a migrant hostel in a neighbourhood was often not correlated with the development of an ethnic concentration in that same neighbourhood. Consideration of the availability of low-skilled work opportunities and affordable housing was equally (or more) important in understanding why migrants moved to particular areas after leaving the hostel system. The changing nature of government policy over time (from assimilation towards multiculturalism), and shifts in the method of service delivery (to a decreasing number of more centralised hostels), provided environments more conducive to evolving ethnic residential concentrations, but without ever fostering the development of segregated enclaves or ghettos as seen in other parts of the world. It could even be contended that in many cases the presence of the hostels inhibited formation of ethnic enclaves, since the hostel system provided support and services often not present in countries lacking hostels, which likely caused migrants in those countries to seek support from people of the same ethnicity and thus generated residential clusters and even enclaves.

As shown throughout this paper, the departure records contained within hostel registers have considerable future potential for allowing researchers to trace migrants' settlement patterns in extensive detail. However, the process of transcribing this material is extremely time consuming. If we consider only the three largest centres in Adelaide, namely Finsbury/Pennington (55 volumes of names), Glenelg (24 volumes) and Woodside (2.25 m of individual cards arranged alphabetically by surname), the material is voluminous. Nevertheless, the complete transcription of registers for Gawler Hostel as part of the Hostel Stories project, together with samplings of other centres, has already produced some important information, and, perhaps more importantly, ongoing questions for consideration.¹⁹

What is particularly striking based on data from the hostel registers is that there are no obvious patterns of settlement. Consider, for instance, the diverse patterns described above

during the period in which multiple ethnicities were represented in South Australia's hostels, especially in the early years (late 1940s through to the 1960s), and the varied patterns seen during the mass arrivals of specific ethnicities in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Pennington received a number of groups of Yugoslavian refugees in 1973. Focusing just on one group of 64 people who arrived on the same day, it is interesting to note that some of these families left the hostel within days, while others were there for months. While some settled locally, others moved across the Adelaide metropolitan area and some into regional areas of South Australia. Ongoing data entry will allow for comparisons across hostels, across time, and within ethnic groups and will continue to provide answers—and, of course, raise further questions—about migrants' settlement patterns.

Methodologically, our work on the Hostel Stories project has highlighted the value of moving beyond aggregate census statistics to analysis of data on individual movements. These data, available in historical records (such as hostel arrival and departure registers) and oral testimony, allow us to better explore the range of human experiences associated with migrant transition into the community and the potential for development of ethnic or other social groupings. Furthermore, as we continue to accumulate richer, qualitative data, we will be able to examine migrant settlement over time and place in response to changing policies and a rapidly changing society. Through this study, we hope to contribute substantively and methodologically to ongoing discussions about the role of government policy and migrant accommodation provision in the development of a functional multicultural Australian society.

Notes

1. In addition to clusters discussed in the body of the paper, classic examples include Italian ethnic clusters in Leichhardt (NSW) and Carlton (VIC); see Reynolds (2000) and Jones (1964) respectively.
2. For example, the scholars of the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s such as Wirth (1928). For more recent studies, see, for instance, the various papers on ethnic settlements in cities such as London, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, and Brussels contained in the special issue of *Urban Studies* 35 (10) (1998).
3. See, for example, Harney's work on Italians in Canada (Harney 1985) and Burnley's work (Burnley 1989) on the Vietnamese in Sydney.
4. For a good outline of the relevant international history, see Jupp, McRobbie, and York (1990).
5. However, some scholars have described these locales as 'ghettos' (e.g. Peel 2012, 96).
6. The term 'New Australian' was coined by Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell in the late 1940s in an attempt to deter the use of the pejorative titles 'Balts' and 'Reffos' (short for refugees) which were being applied to new arrivals. It also fit with the wider rhetoric of the assimilationist policy of the day. The term 'New Australian' soon took on its own derogatory connotations.
7. Pauline Hanson was the co-founder (1997) and leader of One Nation, a populist political party with a highly conservative and anti-multiculturalism platform. She was expelled from One Nation in 2002, and rejoined the party in 2013, becoming its leader again in 2014. In 2016, she was elected to the Federal Senate representing Queensland.
8. The Cronulla riots (mid-December 2005) involved a series of race riots and outbreaks of mob violence, assault, and property damage in Cronulla, a beachside suburb of Sydney, and spread to surrounding communities. The riots stemmed from tensions between young people of Lebanese and Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.
9. Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics census website in numerous places stresses the need for continuity in the questions asked so that social changes can be measured over time,

they make 'new inclusions to meet emerging information needs'. So, for instance, ancestry data were included in the 1986 census but the results were inconsistent, especially for third- or fourth-generation immigrants who could not report their backgrounds accurately. Ancestry questions were removed in 1991 and 1996, and reinstated in 2001 with more specific instructions, but were coded using a standard classification system; see the ABS Fact Sheet at:

[http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyReleaseDate/A7A0E94399353F1](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyReleaseDate/A7A0E94399353F1DCA257148008018DC?OpenDocument)

[DCA257148008018DC?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyReleaseDate/A7A0E94399353F1DCA257148008018DC?OpenDocument). Because of these factors, the overall numbers and the picture provided vary significantly between census years.

10. At hostels such as Finsbury/Pennington, Glenelg, and Gawler (all SA), these records take the form of large, oversized register books that record all arrivals in black/blue and all departures, including first address, in red. Woodside Hostel (SA) used a system of individual registration cards noting names and dates of arrival as well as the departure dates and destination addresses. These records are available at the National Archives of Australia (NAA) office, Adelaide.
11. During and following both world wars, the Australian government required all 'aliens', that is foreign nationals or non-British subjects, living in Australia to register with local authorities. These forms include information on arrival, birthplace, occupation, marital status, and sometimes physical descriptions or photographs. As all 'aliens' were required to notify change of address, these are useful records of places of abode. Registrations were required between 1916 and 1926, and again between 1939 and 1971, and records are held in the NAA. Information gathered varied over time but typically included name of ship, date of arrival, date and place of birth, occupation, marital status and current address. Later registrations also included physical description and even photographs. What is critical for our purposes is that every change of abode had to be registered, hence providing an excellent data source.
12. See, for example, NAA: J25, 1966/2798, Social Welfare—Migrant Accommodation—Problem Cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels], Brisbane. Length of stay was further limited in 1972 to 12 months.
13. Policy for the establishment of hostels stated that: 'Sites should be reasonably accessible from places of work; a total of approximately two hours travelling time per day is maximum. Use of established transport facilities is desirable.' See NAA, D618, IM4 PART 1, [Department of Immigration]—Gawler (SA) NA [New Australians] hostel accommodation, Sydney.
14. Citations to interviews provide an internal reference and the date of the interview from the oral histories which are part of the Hostel Stories project. Interviews will be lodged at the State Library of South Australia on completion of the project where permission from participants was provided.
15. This sample is taken from vol. 4 in NAA, Series D2419, Adelaide.
16. The term 'Australian way of life', although never defined, was coined in the 1940s and came into regular usage in the 1950s in official, public and even advertising vernacular. It represented a quintessential and idealised Australian lifestyle (Murphy 2000).
17. For example, the Indo-Chinese Refugee Association worked from an office situated in the Pennington Hostel itself, and social welfare workers no longer travelled between multiple hostels and work camps but also were located in the hostel itself.
18. For example, oral testimony has informed us about the formation of soccer and other sporting clubs in the hostels that later transferred to associated ethnic communities. Similarly, a Chilean migrant couple at Pennington Hostel explained how, seeking ethnic and cultural support, Chilean people met regularly under a particular eucalyptus tree and later went on to form the Chilean Club.
19. These transcriptions will be made publicly available at the conclusion of the Hostel Stories project.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our collaborators on the project for their input and contributions to this paper, and to the anonymous reviewers on the original version of this paper. We wish to dedicate this paper to the memory of our colleague Graeme Hugo, who served on the Advisory Board for the Hostel Stories project and was an enthusiastic supporter of it.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Research for this paper was supported by a Linkage Grant from the Australian Research Council [grant number LP120100553], ‘Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants’ to the University of Adelaide in collaboration with the Migration Museum and in partnership with the cities of Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield, State Records, and the Vietnamese Community in Australia (South Australian chapter).

ORCID

Rachel A. Ankeny  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1547-6031>

References

- Abrahamson, M. 1996. *Urban Enclaves: Identity and Place in America*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Advocate. 1950. “Making Good Australians.” Tasmania.
- Ang, I., et al. 2002. *Living Diversity: Australia’s Multicultural Future*. Artarmon, NSW: Special Broadcasting Service Corporation.
- Ang, I., et al. 2006. *Connecting Diversity: Paradoxes of Multicultural Australia*. Artarmon, NSW: Special Broadcasting Service Corporation.
- Birrell, B. 1993. “Ethnic Concentrations: The Vietnamese Experience.” *People and Place* 1 (3): 26–32.
- Blainey, G. 1988. “Australia Must Break Down the Walls of the Ghettos.” *The Weekend Australian*, Sydney.
- Boal, F.W. 1978. “Ethnic Residential Segregation.” In *Social Areas in Cities: Processes, Patterns, and Problems. Vol. 1: Spatial Processes and Form*, edited by D. T. Herbert and R. J. Johnson, 57–95. Chichester: Wiley.
- Burnley, I. H. 1989. “Settlement Dimensions of the Vietnam-Born Population in Metropolitan Sydney.” *Australian Geographical Studies* 27 (2): 129–154.
- Burnley, I. H. 1994. “Immigration, Ancestry and Residence in Sydney.” *Australian Geographical Studies* 32 (1): 69–89.
- Burnley, I. H. 1999. “Levels of Immigrant Residential Concentration in Sydney and Their Relationship with Disadvantage.” *Urban Studies* 36 (8): 1295–1315.
- City of Charles Sturt. 2011. “Pennington Community Profile.” Accessed February 1, 2016. <http://profile.id.com.au/charles-sturt/ancestry?WebID=150>.
- Collins, J. 1992. “Migrant Hands in a Distant Land.” In *Images of Australia*, edited by G. Whitlock and D. Carter, 102–124. St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press.
- Coughlan, J. E. 2008. “The Changing Spatial Distribution of Australia’s Vietnamese Communities.” Paper presented at *The Re-imagining Sociology Conference of The Australian Sociological*

- Association*, Melbourne. Accessed January 3, 2016 <https://www.tasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Coughlan-James-Session-61-PDF.pdf>.
- Dunn, K. M. 1998. "Rethinking Ethnic Concentration: Cabramatta, The Case of Sydney." *Urban Studies* 35 (3): 503–527.
- Grimes, S. 1993. "Residential Segregation in Australian Cities: A Literature Review." *International Migration Review* 27 (1): 103–120.
- Hanson, P. 1996. "Maiden Speech." Accessed January 6, 2016. <http://australianpolitics.com/1996/09/10/pauline-hanson-maiden-speech.html>.
- Harney, R. F. 1985. "Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods." In *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834–1945*, edited by R. F. Harney, 1–24. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- Jones, F. L. 1964. "Italians in the Carlton Area: The Growth of an Ethnic Concentration." *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* X: 83–95.
- Jupp, J., A. McRobbie, and B. York. 1990. *Metropolitan Ghettos and Ethnic Concentrations: Volume 1*, Working Paper 1. Multicultural Studies, University of Wollongong.
- Kempen, R., and Ş. A. Özüekren. 1998. "Ethnic Segregation in Cities: New Forms and Explanations in a Dynamic World." *Urban Studies* 35 (10): 1631–1656.
- Marsden, S. 1977. *A History of Woodville*. Woodville: Corporation of the City of Woodville.
- McKenzie, P. 1999. "Swimming in and out of focus: Second Contact, Vietnamese Migrant Others and Australian Selves." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 10 (3): 271–287.
- Murphy, J. 2000. *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
- National Archives Australia—Glenelg North Hostel arrival and departure registers, D2419, Vol 4, 26 June 1959 to 1 February 1960, Adelaide.
- National Archives Australia—Social Welfare—Migrant Accommodation—Problem Cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels], J25, 1966/2798, Brisbane.
- National Archives Australia, D4878, Mrozek Henryrk, Adelaide.
- National Archives Australia, D4881, Mrozek Henryrk, Adelaide.
- National Archives Australia [Department of Immigration]—Gawler SA NA [New Australians] hostel accommodation, D618, IM4 PART 1, Sydney.
- Peach, C. 1996. "Does Britain Have Ghettos?" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21 (1): 216–235.
- Peel, M. 2012. "A Place to Grow: Making a Future in Postwar South Australia." In *Turning Points: Chapters in South Australian History*, edited by R. Foster and P. Sendziuk, 88–102. Adelaide: Wakefield Press.
- Poulsen, M., R. Johnston, and J. Forrest. 2002. "Plural Cities and Ethnic Enclaves: Introducing a Measurement Procedure for Comparative Study." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26 (2): 229–243.
- Poulsen, M., R. Johnston, and J. Forrest. 2004. "Is Sydney a Divided City Ethnically?" *Australian Geographical Studies* 42 (3): 356–377.
- Reynolds, A. 2000. "The Italian Heritage in Leichhardt: Sydney's 'Little Italy,'" In *In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium*, edited by P. Genovesi and W. Musolino, 377–390. Melbourne: Gro-set.
- Salt, B. 2010. "Our Cities Harbour a Lively Patchwork of Ghettos, Enclaves." Accessed February 4, 2016. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/our-cities-harbour-a-lively-patchwork-of-ghettos-enclaves/story-e6frg9jx-1225931946101>.
- Wirth, L. 1928. *The Ghetto*. Chicago: Phoenix.
- Zang, X., and R. Hassan. 1996. "Residential Choices of Immigrants in Australia." *International Migration* 34 (4): 567–582.

*Appendix 2. Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South
Australian Hostel System*

Published in Kleinig, M.A. & Richards, E. (eds.), *On the Wing: Mobility before
and after Emigration to Australia, Visible Immigrants Vol 7*, Anchor Books
Australia, Spit Junction, NSW 2013

Displaced Persons and the 'Continuum of Mobility' in the South Australian Hostel System

Karen Agutter

All migrants are mobile, and certainly there is, as Schuster notes, an increasing awareness of migrant mobility, of emigration as “an ongoing process, as a series of departures and arrivals”.¹ However, not all migrants are actually free to make choices about their migrations. During and after the Second World War millions of Displaced Persons (DPs) were on the move, fleeing the consequences of war and the spread of communism, often having no homeland to return to. Moving through Europe and living in camps, their migration was forced upon them and, unlike voluntary migrants, their choice of destination was, as Kunz argues, not in preference to their country of birth, but rather in preference to a country of asylum.²

This paper considers the migration of these DPs as they moved through camps in Europe, to Australia. It will argue that for many DPs their lack of control over their own migrations, which had begun in Europe, often continued once in Australia, forced upon them by Government policy and circumstances beyond their control and which required them to work for two years before their release from their refugee status.

¹ L. Schuster, 'The Continuing Mobility of Migrants in Italy: Shifting between Places and Stature', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005), p. 758.

² E. F. Kunz, *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians* (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1988), p. 24.

Displaced Persons: An Example

To begin, let us consider a narrative, the tale of a particular DP family. Michal Z was born in Poland and before the war worked on his father's farm at Sideradz 50 kilometres south-south west of Łódź in central Poland. In 1949 he was forcibly removed from the farm by the Gestapo and taken to Łódź to work as a metal worker in a factory. From Łódź he was transferred almost 800 kilometres to Dortmund in Germany. Later, when interviewed by Australian officials, he stated that he was then sent to a variety of places around Dortmund in the district of Westphalia working in German factories for the duration of the war. Afterwards, Michal continued to move from DP Camp to DP Camp, from Buldern to Lette to Rheda and then finally to Hamm, Westphalia. In 1949 Michal married a Polish woman in the camp – Czeslawa - and with her child, Regina, they were accepted for emigration to Australia (although Michal had originally stated at interview that he wanted to go to Canada).³

The family travelled from Fallingbostal Camp in Westphalia to Naples where they embarked on the *General W G Haan* to Melbourne, arriving in February 1950.⁴ Initially they were placed in the Reception and Training Centre at Bonegilla but according to Michal's alien registration documents within a few weeks he was in Smithfield Hostel in South Australia, a workers' hostel for male migrants. Unlike many DPs, Michal was fortunate as his work contracts kept him close to his family. He was sent initially to the Corporation of Walkerville at Semaphore then to Timber Mills in Port Adelaide and subsequently to Holden in Woodville. Czeslawa and Regina were at Gawler Hostel, relatively nearby, and by October 1950 Michal was able to join them there.⁵ He was released from his work contract in 1952 and naturalised

³ National Archives Australia, A12009, R251-R25; ZIMNY Michal born 21 November 1909; Czeslawa, born 3 April 1923; Regina, born 9 April 1945.

⁴ National Archives Australia: D4878, ZIMNY C; ZIMNY Czeslawa born 1923, Regina born 1945 - Nationality: Polish - arrived Melbourne per General W G Haan, 21 February 1950.

⁵ National Archives Australia: D2421, Vol. 1: Arrival and departure register; Gawler Hostel, 1 July 1950 to 13 September 1952; Smithfield Hostel, 9 April 1953 to 18 April 1953.

in 1957. Interestingly, at the time of his naturalisation he and his family were living at Semaphore Park having settled, apparently, in the neighbourhood they knew.⁶

This example of continual movement was common, although not all DPs were as fortunate in the linear ease of their migration trajectory. So how did this migration come about, how was it typical and how was it different?

Displaced Persons in Europe

From the moment war began the mass movement of people also began, as millions of Europeans were transported to concentration and work camps and others fled across borders in search of safety. As early as October 1939, Franklin D Roosevelt, addressing the Inter-Governmental Committee on Political Refugees, predicted that 'When this ghastly war ends maybe not 1,000,000 homeless refugees but 10,000,000 or 20,000,000 will be the problem to be faced'.⁷ Certainly by 1943 allied armies and governments were well aware of the number of refugees already evident in war zones and were actively trying to plan and prepare for the post-war years.⁸

By the end of the war millions of people were displaced. Wyman states that by mid-1945 there were 7 million civilians on the move in Western Europe, another 7 million in the Soviet Union's control areas, and several hundred thousand elsewhere on the Continent. Added to these people were some 12 million *Volksdeutsche* or Ethnic Germans who would join the ranks of the displaced as well as the survivors of the Reich's 500 concentration and work camps.⁹ Europe was a mass of mobile people and at the end of the war some 8 million were officially labelled as Displaced Persons under the United Nations

⁶ National Archives Australia: D400, SA1956/8958; Zimny, Michael & Czeslawa Application for Naturalisation.

⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 10 October 1939, 'Results of War', p. 10.

⁸ M. Wyman, *DPs Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁹ Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, p. 21.

Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).¹⁰ From this 8 million, military and UNRRA officials succeeded in returning almost 7 million DPs to their countries of origin, often with tragic consequences, but 1.2 million people from a number of ethnic and national origins still remained homeless in Germany¹¹ and in need of resettlement.¹² Makeshift camps were initially established by allied military personal but were soon organised under the auspices of UNRRA. Described by one United Nations envoy as spreading “like a cancerous growth”, over 700 DP camps soon stretched from Northern Germany to Southern Italy, operating in a variety of seconded buildings, more traditional camp settings and even whole sections of villages.¹³

As Michal’s story tells us, placement in refugee camps was not an end to ongoing movement. The war separated families, friends and ethnic and religious groups and in the months and years following the armistice many people remained transitory. Some moved from camp to camp searching for family and for friends; others moved out of a desire to be with members of their own ethnic group, clinging to familiarity and comfort in common language and customs.¹⁴

For many the wait for resettlement was long, some DPs spending years as refugees in one or more of the camps.¹⁵ Between 1947 and 1954, over one million DPs were eventually relocated overseas¹⁶ under the supervision of the

¹⁰ G. D. Cohen, “The ‘Human Rights Revolution’ at Work,” in Hoffmann, S.-L. (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 45.

¹¹ It should also be noted that many others would appear in other areas of Europe, across the Middle East and into Asia between 1947 and 1950. See G. D. Cohen, *In War’s Wake: Europe’s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 7.

¹² Cohen, *In War’s Wake: Europe’s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, p. 5.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

¹⁴ Wyman, *DPs*, p. 56.

¹⁵ Wyman, *DPs*, p. 44.

¹⁶ Camp visitors described buildings with walls “covered with maps, flyers and photographs advertising the charms of Australia, Canada or the United States” as countries tried to attract the most “suitable” to their shores. See Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, p. 107.

International Refugee Organisation (IRO), in what has been described as an ‘instance of planned population redistribution’.¹⁷ In Australia, the selection of immigrants from the European pool was strict. Department of Immigration officials sought young, healthy workers with priority initially being given to single people and childless couples.¹⁸ According to Wyman, DPs soon began flocking to the Australian resettlement program, because it accepted or rejected applicants quickly,¹⁹ suggesting a want or need among these people for a more permanent state of being. Eventually over 170,000 DPs settled in Australia²⁰ second only to the United States (400,000).²¹

Acceptance by Australian authorities, however, did not put an end to ongoing movement. For the majority of Australian bound DPs, the first stop was the Australian holding camp in Naples, to await passage. Time spent in Naples varied. Initially the waiting period was heavily dependent on the availability, or lack, of ships for transport. Unfortunately a variety of illnesses and epidemics (such as measles) were common and families were often separated with women and children being left behind while husbands went on ahead. Once recovered, families could be sent on to other Australian camps in ports such as Bremerhaven in northern Germany, for ease of shipping.²²

Displaced Persons in Australia

The very first boatload of carefully selected DPs arrived in Australia on the 27th November 1947 and the refugee migration reached its peak in the twelve months of 1949-50. The DPs resettled in Australia began the “social

¹⁷ Cohen, *In War's Wake*, p. 11.

¹⁸ H. B. M. Murphy, “The Assimilation of Refugee Immigrants in Australia,” *Population Studies* 5, no. 3 (1952), p. 180.

¹⁹ Wyman, *DPs*, p. 191.

²⁰ Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, p xvii.

²¹ Wyman, *DPs*, p. 2.

²² This is exactly what happened to Rutina Vasers, whose two sons contracted measles in Naples. They would later sail from Bremerhaven in Germany. Like most other migrants travelling by sea from Europe, their first sight of Australia was Fremantle, but their ultimate destination was Newcastle and then the Greta Reception and Training Centre. See A. Scully (ed.), *Memories of Mayfield* (Mayfield: Mayfield Chamber of Commerce, 1997), n.p.

revolution” which by 1966 meant that almost one in five Australians was a post-war immigrant or the child of one, and 60 per cent of these had non-British backgrounds – a momentous shift from pre-war Australian population composition.²³

A number of factors in post-war Australia had resulted in the establishment of a unique system of migrant centres and hostels for new arrivals. The system was designed particularly to prevent new arrivals competing with Australians for the limited available housing and materials. It was also shaped by the shortage of workers in particular industries and places after the war, as well as the system of two-year work contracts. Beyond these factors were the logistics of mass migration and settlement, and the general requirements of Australia’s assimilationist policy.

Consequently, under the control of the newly formed Department of Immigration, the first step for the newly arrived DPs was the Reception and Training Centre. While Bonegilla, the largest of these centres, comes most readily to mind, Reception and Training Centres were in fact located across the country from Bathurst in New South Wales to Cunderdin in Western Australia. In these centres DPs were “processed” and in some cases given clothing and other essentials by organisations such as the Red Cross. Under Department of Immigration policy, DPs were registered as aliens and the process of assimilation commenced with the continuation of English lessons, which had begun in European camps, with an emphasis on the benefits of citizenship and information about the “Australian way of life”.²⁴ By 1949, the immigration centres could hold up to 15,000 refugees.²⁵ Although stays were occasionally prolonged, generally Reception and Training Centres were, as their title suggests, usually only a transitory stop within the DPs’ ongoing migration.

²³ Wyman, *DPs*, p. 191.

²⁴ National Archives Australia: B550, 1948/23/5138; Displaced Persons: Policy - Placement of Family Groups and Heads of Families.

²⁵ A.-M. Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1995), p. 47.

The next stage of the ongoing movement and migration was possibly the most traumatic for these refugees who had already suffered so much separation even before they arrived in Australia. New families were again split up, often for the duration of the initial two-year work contract, male breadwinners located in workers' hostels (run by the Department of Labour and National Service) and women and children placed in Department of Immigration Holding Centres, often located in isolated former Army or Air Force camps such as Gawler and Woodside in South Australia. For the dubious privilege of this separation a refugee was obliged to pay up to £3 a week.²⁶ Accommodation costs often took up most, if not all, of a refugee's earnings and although, as Ann-Marie Jordens claims, this 'provided aliens with a powerful incentive that British migrants did not have to move out of State-provided housing into private accommodation,'²⁷ very few in fact had sufficient money to save towards such a dream, tying them completely to the hostel system, often for prolonged periods, even years.

As noted earlier, Michal was fortunate in his continued proximity to his family, but for many the separation was severe, both geographically and psychologically. Even for those whose families were nominally in the same town, work commitments, lack of money and lack of transport meant they had little time together. In 1950, the *Advertiser* reported on the hardships DPs faced in Adelaide:

In factories and work shops throughout Adelaide New Australians from every walk of life are working out their two-year contracts in unfamiliar occupations . . . The story of George Hawryszkiewy . . . is typical of the hardships of many New Australians. A barrister in a small town in the Ukraine, he was evacuated in the retreat of the German army, and put to forced labor [sic]. With his wife and three children, he spent four years

²⁶ The payment schedule meant that a DP, in addition to his own accommodation fees, paid 30 shillings a week for his wife and each dependent child over 16, and 12s 6d a week for each child aged between one and thirteen, up to a combined total of £3.

²⁷ Jordens, *Redefining Australians*, p. 48.

in a displaced persons' camp at Gottingen. There he learned English in preparation for migrating to Australia....Under his contract, he is working as a trimmer in a motor-body works...He lives at Finsbury and his wife and children at Woodside. He is able to visit them only once a fortnight.²⁸

For many men working in South Australia, their families were hundreds of miles away and even fortnightly visits were not possible. The Australian National Archives contains many files dealing with requests for reunification of families and some of the stories are both moving and frustrating for the reader. In September 1950 a Hungarian DP, Istvan, was sent to work at McDonald Motors in Adelaide while his wife and children were placed in the Parkes Holding Centre in NSW. Although the company he was working for tried to help Istvan, the nearest accommodation they could find for the family was over 250 kilometres away in Loxton!²⁹ In another example, DP Wasyl wrote to the Department of Immigration social worker from Gawler in September 1949. Wasyl, believing his wife and two children were in Cunderdin Centre in Western Australia, had been sending them money and was very upset to receive a letter from the manager of Graylands Centre (also in Western Australia) saying that his wife was “extremely distressed”, lonely and pleading for reunification. Social worker Ms Dyson’s reply was sympathetic and helpful but also evidence of the bureaucratic restrictions which bound these refugees and influenced their movements after arrival. She wrote:

Our Commonwealth Migration Officer already knows that your wife and children are anxious to join you as soon as possible. However, he must receive approval from the Adelaide office before your family can be transferred...I have ...asked the officer concerned to arrange to let you know when your wife

²⁸ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 5 April 1950, “Migrants Plan New Future,” p. 4.

²⁹ National Archives Australia: AP381/4, SA1949/5091; Accommodation of DP's dependants to SA in Parkes.

leaves for Adelaide. It may take time but you will all be together as soon as it can be arranged.³⁰

For some dependents, the separation was so unbearable that they left the Holding Centres in which they had been placed and joined their husbands despite warnings that:

should they endeavour to enter Workers' Hostels without official permission they will be turned back at the gates and obliged to return to the Holding Centre where accommodation has been provided for them by the Government. Any persons defying these instructions will render themselves liable for deportation to Europe and deportation action will be taken against offenders.³¹

Although DPs themselves were understandably distressed by separation, few in positions of power commented or complained. One exception was South Australian Labour politician AV Thompson. In February 1950 he stood up for 35 DP men resident in Finsbury Hostel, requesting the Minister for Immigration in the Commonwealth Parliament (Holt) to see that these men were reunited with their wives and children currently in Bonegilla.³² This, and other continued requests by DPs themselves, did result in minor concessions including the issue of instructions to Australian migration officers in Europe that they must tell prospective migrants of the probability of separation from their families and eventually a change of policy which saw the Department make every effort to reunite families as accommodation became available, with those separated the longest given preference. Although this was a small victory, unfortunately other events were occurring that aggravated the ongoing movement of many DPs.

³⁰ National Archives Australia: K403, W59/35 PART 1; [Immigration Department, migrants] Assimilation – welfare work social welfare general.

³¹ National Archives Australia: K403, W59/926 Part 1; [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100.

³² *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 24 February 1950, "S.A. Query on Migrant Separation," p. 4.

The Coal Strike

In 1949, as DP arrivals peaked, a major coal strike occurred and DP movement out of Reception and Training Centres to employment slowed to 37%. The Department of Immigration went into “crisis mode” and Tasman Heyes (Secretary for Department of Immigration) wrote of the situation in terms of an “emergency”. Centres were ‘full to overflowing’, work had dried up and the Government had to temporarily cover the accommodation costs for DPs who had no incomes and DPs themselves were placed on temporary benefits.³³ But as more DPs were en route and arriving, current residents had to be moved. Yet again the DPs were shunted onwards, often only with hand luggage, this time to make space for new arrivals. The urgency of this movement is shown in the Department of Immigration files and in Departmental telegrams such as one sent on Tuesday 29th November 1949 to the manager of Bonegilla – ‘Looking to you to move maximum number capable of being accommodated Dunreath [Western Australia] by Saturday’,³⁴ a period of just four days. DP protest at this ongoing migration was limited as, tied by contract, they had no control of their own movements, and were simply threatened by Social Services at Bonegilla that their special benefit payments would cease if they complained or resisted being moved.³⁵

Although the 1949 Coal Strike was forcibly ended within weeks, by swift government action, the episode highlights how the DPs were at the mercy of circumstances outside of their control, the next of which would be the arrival of other, more ‘preferred’ migrants – the British.

Displacement by British Arrivals

In 1951, as British immigration ramped up, the decision was made to make various hostels, including the Finsbury Hostel in South Australia, British-only

³³ National Archives Australia: MP1722/1, 1949/23/5390: Temporary transfer of Displaced Persons from reception and training centres to Migrant Workers' Accommodation Division hostels: policy and procedure.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*

hostels. This decision meant that over 800 resident DPs at Finsbury had to be moved, yet again victims of the decisions of others. As “FM” from Finsbury said in a letter to the editor in the *Advertiser* ‘we will be forced to go to Gawler, Smithfield and Glenelg. It is not a pleasure to wander from place to place as a gipsy.’³⁶

For these DPs this was perhaps one move too many. Some had already moved up to six times in Australia, and they stood their ground. When fourteen buses and trucks arrived at Finsbury to remove the DPs from the centre they left empty several hours later. Tensions were high and arrests ensued. Officials responded by refusing to provide the residents with food, threatening to take their blankets and other provisions, and maintaining a strong police presence. It is hardly surprising that DPs likened the situation to the concentration camps they thought they had left behind.³⁷ They pleaded in letters to the newspapers that:

We have had many years of running away from enemies and we praised Heaven that at last we get a home and are among people who are kind to us. And now we must move again.³⁸

DPs claimed that they had been promised that the move to Finsbury would be the last before they were allowed to seek their own homes outside the camps. One migrant said that camp occupants paid £3 a week for living at the hostel, and they felt that this entitled them to a voice in arrangements being made for them.³⁹ It appears that these DPs had found their voice against the ongoing forced migrations and they had also found an ally in the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, particularly South Australian State President, Mr L. McKenzie. While McKenzie urged the migrants “not to defy the law” he did manage to arrange a meeting between the migrants' committee and a representative of the Immigration Minister. He also sought legal advice on their behalf and engaged a solicitor.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 2 January 1951, “Does Not Want to Leave Finsbury,” p. 4.

³⁷ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 6 January 1951, “Feeling Runs High in Migrant Camp,” p. 1.

³⁸ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 10 January 1951, “No Quarrel With British Migrants,” p. 4.

³⁹ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 6 January 1951, “Migrants Will Defy 'Quit Hostel' Order,” p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Advertiser*, “Feeling Runs High in Migrant Camp,” p. 1.

Following further meetings,⁴¹ including with the Minister for Immigration himself, a compromise was finally reached whereby DPs would be allowed to remain at Finsbury until the Glenelg hostel was completed, and no new admissions of DPs to Finsbury would occur, preventing another potential forced movement. Interestingly the *Advertiser* reported that a ‘storm of applause lasting several minutes ... showed the appreciation of ... New Australians at Finsbury migrant hostel for the democratic hearing given by the Minister for Immigration.’⁴² But DPs at Finsbury were still forced to move to Glenelg when it opened a few months later.

Displacement by Work Contracts

These examples are not isolated. Reading the archival files for the period one is struck by what seems like an endless parade of people being shifted from place to place, often across thousands of kilometres. The two year work contracts resulted in DPs being sent wherever their labour was required. For instance, in November 1950 forty DPs were flown from Perth to Adelaide to work as timber cutters, leaving families behind in Western Australia. As the *Advertiser* reported, they had been moved ‘because of the urgency of the work.’⁴³ Also in 1950, a large group of married couples were sent from Western Australia, the men to work for the South Australian Harbour’s Board at Port Adelaide while their wives went into live-in domestic service at various

⁴¹ Two delegates appointed by the Finsbury Hostel DPs, McKenzie, and a Mr. Zelenay, the official interpreter, were flown to Melbourne to plead their case before William Funnell, the Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service. See *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 8 January 1951, “Migrant Camp Delegates for Melbourne,” p 3. At this meeting the South Australian deputation was told that similar movements had already been made in Sydney and Melbourne because this was the only alternative to deferring the departure from England of British migrant ships, and provision must be made for the accommodation of British families. See *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 10 January 1951, “Migrants Must Leave Finsbury Camp,” p. 4.

⁴² *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 12 January 1951, “Migrants Cheers For Minister,” p. 4.

⁴³ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 4 November 1950, “Migrants Flown To S.A. From Perth,” p. 5.

addresses around Adelaide.⁴⁴ Aside from domestic service, women were often sent to work in hospitals and hotels in regional locations including the Burra and Lameroo Hospitals, and the Barmera and Snowtown hotels.⁴⁵ Seasonal work, fruit picking and cane cutting, also created ongoing movement for DPs, as they followed the harvests around Australia in fulfilment of their two-year work contracts.

For some DPs, ongoing migration in Australia was self-initiated in an effort to re-unite with family and loved ones. Polish DP Janina and her son Jan sailed from the Australian camp at Naples to Melbourne and Bonegilla. From there they were sent to Hobart where Janina was to work as a domestic servant. However, Janina was pregnant and her fiancé Stanislaw was in the Finsbury hostel in Adelaide. After unsuccessful negotiations with the Department of Immigration, she eventually flew to Adelaide at her own expense, but on arrival she and her son were housed at Woodside and then at Gawler, both some distance from the Finsbury Hostel.⁴⁶

The ongoing migration of DPs, once they arrived in Australia, is perhaps best evidenced in the arrival and departure registers of the various hostels.⁴⁷ Page after page of people coming and going, in some cases like Michal and his family, only once or twice before moving out of the system, but for many DPs these movements occurred over and over, often across long distances, and often resulting in prolonged separations from loved ones.

⁴⁴ National Archives Australia: MP1722/1, 5023/1901 PART 2; Displaced Persons: Allocations of DPs to All States.

⁴⁵ National Archives Australia; Displaced Persons: Allocations of DPs to All States.

⁴⁶ I do not know if Janina and Stanislaw were ever reunited; she later died in the Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital. National Archives Australia: P1182, DETKO; Personal case files for non-British migrants who are deceased, lexicographical series.

⁴⁷ Each Commonwealth Hostel entered the arrival and departure of migrants – see for example National Archives Australia, Series D2416, 62 volumes for Finsbury/Pennington Hostel or Series 2419, 24 volumes for Glenelg Hostel.

Long-Term Consequences

The consequences of this ongoing forced movement have been recognised by many. Jean Martin's study of DPs reported on the "high rate of mobility" that Displaced Persons suffered during their early years in Australia.⁴⁸ In 1952, Murphy, an ex UNRRA and IRO employee, predicted that:

most families are condemned not only to camp life but to separation, the dependents going to a holding centre usually in the country where transport costs reduce the worker's savings still more... church leaders have already alleged an increasing divorce rate from such separation... Under present arrangements one cannot see an end to the family holding centres, and there are over 11,000 families whose children, brought up without balanced parental support, will be liable to crowd the juvenile courts in ten or fifteen years' time.⁴⁹

Certainly children suffered from this constant moving. At Greta Reception and Training Centre in 1949, the camp school had a turnover in excess of 1000 students.⁵⁰ Oral histories given in later life testify to the ongoing resettlement and its effects as families were transferred between hostels and children were uprooted from one school to another.⁵¹ School admission registers, such as those of St Leonards in Glenelg,⁵² list the constant arrival and departure of children with some only staying only a matter of days before moving on. The St Leonards School Journals also record the difficulties encountered in trying to teach these children because of their transience.⁵³ Finally, in 1959 the

⁴⁸ J. I. Martin, *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia* (Canberra, Australian National University, 1965), p. 35.

⁴⁹ H. B. M. Murphy, "Assimilating the Displaced Person," *The Australian Quarterly*, 24, no. 1 (1952), p. 54.

⁵⁰ C. Keating, *A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta, New South Wales, 1939-1960* (Burwood New South Wales: Uri Windt, 1997), p. 49.

⁵¹ C. Murphy (ed.), *Boat Load of Dreams: Journeys by European Immigrant Workers 1947-1994* (Adelaide: United Trades and Labour Council, 1994), p. 65.

⁵² State Records of South Australia: GRS7329/1/P St Leonard's Admission Register.

⁵³ State Records of South Australia: GRS 7330/1; St Leonard's School Journals.

Commonwealth Advisory Council recognised the links between movement, hostels and education in their report on the progress and assimilation of migrant children commenting that:

Some migrant families move frequently during their early years in Australia. This results in broken schooling and makes it more difficult for the children.⁵⁴

For example following the closure of the Gawler Hostel in 1952, DP families were transferred to the Glenelg Hostel and the South Australian Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service, Mr Bland, commented that:

some of the women will no doubt be peeved at the prospect of losing their employment in Gawler but that is their problem. There are about seventy children of school-going age and I have arranged with the State and Catholic schools to provide facilities for the continuance of their education.⁵⁵

Bland did note that ongoing transfer to different locations resulted in ‘breaking roots that may have been established and reduces assimilation’.⁵⁶

The constant movement of DPs created headaches within the system and policy changes and amendments are the subject of many metres of archival documents. Centre Instruction Number 34, 1949, gives some examples of this problem as it recognises that the current system of reporting on numbers and movements of DPs was not “adequate”. In this instruction, the Department of Immigration called for weekly telegraphed returns which must include both

⁵⁴ National Archives Australia: MP1139/1, V1959/66286; Commonwealth Advisory Council: Committee to consider progress and assimilation of migrant children to Australian community.

⁵⁵ National Archives Australia: MP275/5, 264/1/171; Migrant Workers' Accommodation Hostels - general - closing of hostels and transfer of residents - all regions.

⁵⁶ Bland to Regional Directors, Department of Labour and National Service 19 August 1952, in National Archives Australia: B146, 1967/853; Discrimination in employment against migrants [1.7 cm].

completed and anticipated movements. This circular used the Woodside Centre in South Australia as an example:

weekly movements include an intake of 710, movement out since last return – to employment 150, to private accommodation 100, to other centres 100, to staff 20, there are also movement out authorised but not yet moved – 50 to Benalla, 10 to Cowra, 10 to WA, movement in authorised but not yet arrived 10 from Cowra, 20 from Uranquinty and 20 from WA.⁵⁷

This was one week in the life of a Migrant Centre!

Not just DPs

Although this chapter has focused on the ongoing migrations and movements of DPs, many other migrant groups in Australia also suffered under a system which was rapidly growing and constantly changing and evolving.⁵⁸

While later refugees, including Eastern Europeans, White Russians, Timorese, South Americans and Indo-Chinese, would not be subject to the same two year work contracts which contributed greatly to the transient nature of the DPs early life in Australia, they were equally subject to circumstances such as the closure of large numbers of hostels across Australia in the 1970s, which resulted in forced movement to other reception centres, sometimes over long distances.

Nor were British migrants immune to transfer, sometimes at the instigation of the Department of Immigration, such as the 135 Britons who were bussed from Bathurst to Rosewater in 1950.⁵⁹ Sometimes they were moved at their

⁵⁷ National Archives Australia; [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100.

⁵⁸ The sheer size of this “social revolution” meant that the Immigration Department itself increased its staffing numbers from 74 in 1946 to 1218 in 1961; staff stationed overseas increased from 14 in 1947 to 390 in 1961; and net migration climbed from 11,200 in 1947 to 89,090 in 1960. In the 1950s permanent and long-term arrivals averaged 122,100 per annum. See A. Markus, “Heyes, Sir Tasman Hudson Eastwood (1896-1980),” in *ADB Online*.

⁵⁹ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 10 November 1950, “Buses To Bring Migrants Here,” p. 3.

own request, as occurred in response to the horrendous conditions at Rosewater Hostel which saw migrant complaints leading to transfers to Finsbury and interstate hostels.⁶⁰

Last but not least we should bear a thought for the hostel staff, some of whom were ex-migrants, as they too were uprooted and sent to migrant hostels in other towns and states.

Conclusion and Further Research

While no two migrant experiences are the same, it is evident that for many DPs the ongoing turmoil which began in Europe during the war continued for many years, even after they had arrived in Australia. This mobility was, more often than not, forced upon them by circumstances beyond their control, or was a consequence of the specific systems and policies put in place by the Australian officials such as the two-year work contracts and the fluctuating character of the hostel system. Furthermore, this ongoing mobility had a variety of deleterious ramifications, especially for children.

While much has been written on the DPs who came to Australia, in regard to mobility in particular, many questions remain. For example did this long-term forced mobility result in significant numbers of DPs continuing to be migratory, unable to settle in one place? Or did they, like our earlier example of Michal and his family, eventually put down roots in the area of first settlement? What role did gender, marital and family status, ethnicity, or even time spent in the hostel system play? Studies on more recent refugee arrivals, such as the Vietnamese,⁶¹ indicate that while there are some areas of clustered settlement around hostels such as Pennington in South Australia and Wacol in Queensland. There is also evidence of later dispersion tied to economic conditions, a geographic mobility driven by economic circumstances and this is an area that warrants further investigation, not least for the Displaced Persons of post-war Australia.

⁶⁰ *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 15 February 1951, "Migrants Leave," p. 4.

⁶¹ J. E. Coughlan, "The Changing Spatial Distribution of Australia's Vietnamese Communities," in *The Re-imagining Sociology Conference of The Australian Sociological Association* (University of Melbourne, 2008).