

Statistics Section
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

IMMIGRATION
FEDERATION TO CENTURY'S END
1901–2000

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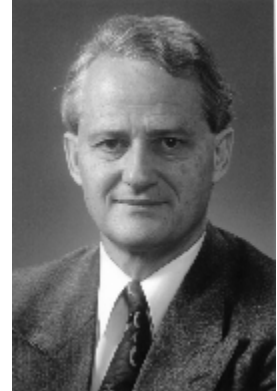
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FOREWORD

It is with pride that I present this contribution to the celebrations of the Centenary Year of the Federation of Australia.

In 1901 Australia had a population of just 4 million. We now have more than 19 million with almost one in four of these born overseas. Australia is indeed a multicultural and cosmopolitan society that owes much to the contribution of our indigenous culture, early European settlement and successive waves of immigration from every continent in the world.

As a truly multicultural nation, we are an example to the rest of the world in demonstrating just what a planned and balanced immigration policy can accomplish.



This publication is an overview of the migration and population history of Australia in the 20th century, bringing together data from a variety of sources. The main sources are the statistical collections of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. In particular, extensive use has been made of the national Censuses.

The contents of the publication allow anyone interested in Australian immigration or population history to study the process of change that occurred in the population in the 20th century.

When the six Australian colonies federated, immigration planning at a federal level was one of the first responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government. At the Centenary of Federation this important responsibility is still a high priority for the Government, as it has been for every Government since Federation.

I am confident that the information provided here will promote a greater understanding of an era of great change in the population of Australia. By studying our immigration and population history we will be better placed to face the future and influence or create the policies that will guide and shape our destiny.

Philip Ruddock
Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
October 2001

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Introduction

On 1 January 1901, the six British colonies, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania were proclaimed the Commonwealth of Australia. Common control over immigration was recognised as one of the major advantages of Federation. As a result, transfer of constitutional responsibility for immigration from the States to the Commonwealth was instituted quickly.

In the 20th century, through controlled immigration and natural increase, Australia's population grew from about four to nineteen million. The composition of the population underwent many changes. This publication is a study of the process of change in the country of birth composition of migration and population in Australia throughout the 20th century. The statistics presented are drawn mostly from previous publications of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

The publication begins with a timeline illustrating the history of immigration intake, population size and population composition. This is included to assist in interpreting the detailed information provided later, by highlighting events that influenced change in immigration intake and the Australian population.

The increasing diversity of the population is illustrated by the inclusion of a section on the composition of the Australian population by country of birth. The low proportion of the overseas-born in the middle of the century compared to the beginning and end of the century is shown and discussed. Also illustrated is the influence of the United Kingdom-born, the dominant, but declining, largest single overseas-born group.

Continuing with information about country of birth, the top ten countries of birth in the population at selected Censuses are identified and tabulated. In a readily accessible form, this section provides an insight into the changing composition of the population from the perspective of the larger countries of birth.

Net Overseas Migration (NOM), a measure of the net addition or loss to Australia's resident population due to migration, is presented in graphical and tabular form along with a discussion of major trends.

The source countries of the almost 6 million settlers who have arrived since World War Two are tabulated in five year arrival period groups. A highlight of the accompanying text is a discussion of the shift away from Europe as the source of settlers. A table of the top ten source countries of settler arrivals follows. The larger countries of birth are presented in this form in order to provide a more easily interpreted outline of the changing composition of settler arrivals.

Sex ratios (the number of males per 100 females) are presented for countries of birth in the Australian population throughout the century. For almost all countries of birth the trend has been for the populations to move from male dominated populations to being balanced in respect of sex.

Median age is a measure of monitoring the changing age structure of a population. A table of median ages for each country of birth is included. The accompanying discussion includes details on the links between movements in median age and the fertility rate, life expectancy and immigration.

Bringing together information provided elsewhere in the publication, the final section provides a brief historical analysis of seven prominent countries of birth in the Australian population. The purpose of this section is not only to highlight these countries but also to show how the information from the publication can be used to construct a detailed history of the trends undergone by a particular country of birth.

DIMA acknowledges the work of authors who contributed to the departmental publications or whose other works were used as background in the production of the publication. These sources are specifically referenced and outlined in References. The illustrations used in the timeline are taken from the photographic archive of DIMA.

It is hoped that “Immigration – Federation to Century’s End –1901–2000” will prove to be a useful resource for all those interested in the process of change that Australia has undergone in the 20th century.
