

## A rich contribution

Australians in the 1940s were very suspicious and angry. They had wanted immigration for the good of Australia but they wanted it on their own terms.

Immigration would be accepted providing it followed the principles of the White Australia policy and ensured that immigrants were assimilated. Politicians could ensure that the White Australia policy would be followed through legislation and administration of the immigration scheme. What would not be controlled was the process by which immigrants would make themselves at home in their adopted country.

What does assimilation mean?

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Although Mr Chifley and Mr Calwell personally appeared on the docks to welcome the first new immigrants, the reality of arriving in their new country was more often traumatic for the immigrant. New immigrants arrived usually by ship and were boarded at immigrant hostels. These hostels were often run down, they had primitive sewerage, mass-production food and did not have interpreters to help the non-English speaking migrants. These homes were meant to be a temporary shelter for the immigrants.

The assisted immigrant had to promise to stay in Australia for a two-year period. Over three-quarters of the immigrants who came from the 1940s to the 1960s provided unskilled labour. These migrants found work in the factories doing unskilled jobs often, which were dangerous and dirty. Some were sent to farms, most migrants however, were not happy with life on the land and returned quickly to the cities. For the skilled migrant, life was often frustrating when their qualifications were not acknowledged and they were left having to retain or take unskilled work. Other skilled workers were placed in engineering, building and manufacturing jobs. Italian and Greek families often used family resources to establish small business.

Immigrants were expected to give up their language and culture, but this did not necessarily happen. Some Australians did not feel comfortable with immigrants who were unable to speak English. This lack of English skills meant that many immigrants only mixed with their own ethnic group. Also, lack of money meant that they could only afford to move to run-down inner suburban areas. New immigrants would often move to the established areas where members of their own ethnic group already lived, leading to the formations of little ethnic cities.

The Australian Press encouraged the belief that crime was a result of immigration and Australians would often mistreat the immigrants. There was no assistance with language barriers in the workplace, unions were not interested in their unique problems, migrant women were paid poorly and many were not informed of their rights. Such treatment caused depression and disorientation.

Why were the immigrants given a harder time in the workplace than other workers?

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Do you think the way that the Australian government and many Australian people behaved towards 'new Australians' was reasonable? Why?

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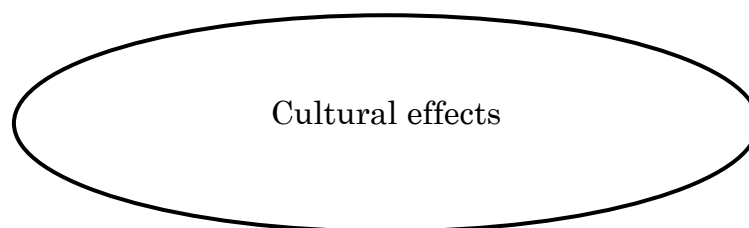
Why did they behave like this?

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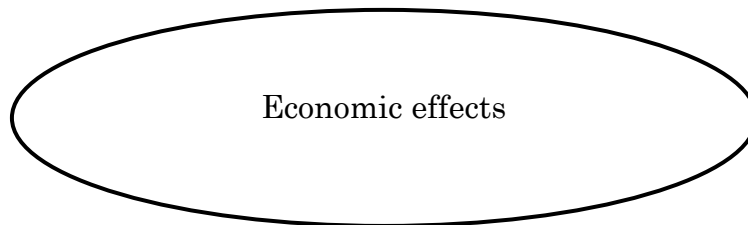
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Cultural effects began to change after WWII to the 1970s. No longer was there now just 'meat and three veg' on the menu. At the local shopping centre or the corner shop you could pick up Chinese food, calamari or lasagne. Migrants brought herbs and spices to the Australian taste buds. New Australians had access to centuries of literature, art and dance. This meant that Australians could see a foreign film, or attend a European play or exhibition. School syllabuses were now developed to include an appreciation of the language and cultures of Australia's newest members.



The influx of immigrants provided labour for Australia's planned development. Each immigrant represented a young back that could be put into work. Immigrants were used in Queensland in sugar plantations, they worked irrigation on the Murray River and, perhaps best known, the Snowy Mountain Hydro Electric Scheme. This stretched from 1949 to 1972, and remains Australia's largest ever project. The scheme required the building of seventeen dams, seven power stations and 160 kilometres of tunnels. The entire project cost the government one billion dollars and it was built by the labour of young, unskilled migrants sent to do back-breaking work.

Immigrants brought an increase in demand for goods and services, in the short term immigration caused a lack of housing, schools and hospitals but economic growth occurs as these were built to accommodate the needs of the migrant. Cities in Sydney and Melbourne began to spring up everywhere. The building industry boomed which helped the economy. Urbanisation brought with it a greater demand for products, which created profits, which in turn produced inflationary pressures that led to higher wages and prices.



In what sort of areas did migrants mainly work?

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How did the migrants feel about their working life? Why?

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## Citizenship and Migrant Australians

As the war came to a close, **Chifley's Labor Government** faced the issue of immigration. The Australian Labor Party had been traditionally hostile to immigration. The view of Labor politicians, union and workers was that immigrants would take jobs that were the birth right to Australians. The Labor Party had always believed that Australia's economy could not support an increase in the population.

The traditional role of the Labor Party was to support the White Australia policy. Labor politicians in the 1940s, such as **Arthur Calwell**, believed that since Federation it had been the wish of the Australia people to maintain Australia as a white civilisation in an Asian region. The RSL made clear that Jews or Europe's 'rejects' would not be welcomed in Australia.

However, Labor set down new specific guidelines for immigration. Reasons for Australia's new immigration policy were:

- Australia needed a larger population to increase production demand for goods.
- Australia needed to justify to the international community why seven million people needed such a large continent.
- Australia needed to join other members of the international community finding homes for the refugees for Nazism and communism.
- Australia needed younger men to defend our shores.

Despite Calwell's insistence on immigration, he maintained a commitment to the White Australia policy. He made public statements in government, such as 'Two Wongs don't make a White' but his actions in deporting over 4000 Asian refugees in 1947 also highlighted the Labor Party's renewed commitment to the White Australia policy.

By 1947 it became clear that the British were not going to fill the **quota** set by the government. Therefore the 1940s saw a ratio of one British for every European entering. Between 1947 and 1967 two million immigrants arrived in Australia and by 1972 there were approximately three million. The 1966 census showed that 18 per cent of Australians were not born in Australia, and that the majority of immigrants had come from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Italy, Greece, Malta, Germany, Yugoslavia, Netherlands and Poland. The late 1950s and 1960s illustrated the economic benefits of immigration as increased labour led to the development of local markets and infrastructure.

By the 1960s immigrants from the Middle East were being accepted. It was not until the 1970s, with the election of the Whitlam government and its Immigration Minister, Al Grosby, that the White Australia policy was quietly done away with and Australia accepted Asian migrants from Vietnam and later Hong Kong.

Did Australia always accept immigrants from all over the world?

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Why did the Labor government agree to accept certain migrants to come to Australia?

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With the Labor Party allowing immigrants to come to Australia, did they totally abandon the White Australia policy? Give reasons.

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What did Mr Calwell mean by 'Two Wongs don't make a White'?

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Why did the government accept other European immigrants?

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What do you notice about the people from the countries that were being accepted to migrate to Australia?

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# Immigration Schemes

The Chifley government decided to \_\_\_\_\_ Australia's immigration program for humanitarian, \_\_\_\_\_ and economic reasons. World War II left many people in Europe homeless. Australia was a country that was safe and where a new life commenced. Chifley's Minister for Immigration, Arthur \_\_\_\_\_, supported the idea of encouraging non- British migrants to Australia after the war. He believed that a larger \_\_\_\_\_ would be better able to defend the country in terms of attack. For Australia, the choice was 'populate or \_\_\_\_\_'. Migration to Australia would have the \_\_\_\_\_ benefits of creating a bigger domestic market and providing a workforce for new \_\_\_\_\_ and projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme. In 1946, changes were made to the \_\_\_\_\_ policy. There was to be an intake of 75 000 migrants of which:

- All had to be white
- The ratio of British to non-British was to be \_\_\_\_\_ to one
- Assisted migrants had to stay for at least \_\_\_\_\_ years and work anywhere they were told to

defence

Calwell

perish

expand

population

ten

industries

two

immigration

economic