

A Better Life

Since 1945, about 7 million people have chosen to make Australia their home. About one quarter of all Australians today were born overseas (see box).

Why Do People Migrate?

People migrate for many reasons. They may want to join family members, or make a new life with the chance of better health and education than could be found in their homelands. They may want to find work, or escape unpleasant or dangerous conditions in their homeland.

Australia's Immigration Programmes

The Australian Government operates two immigration programmes: the Migration Programme and the Humanitarian Programme. The Humanitarian Programme is for refugees fleeing danger in their homeland. The Migration Programme accepts people into Australia who are either skilled in an occupation which Australia needs (skilled stream), or who have members of their family already living in Australia (family stream).

People are accepted for the skilled stream if they have training or experience in an occupation which is in demand in Australia, or if they have business skills and money to invest in a business which will create jobs for other Australians. In 2013-2014, there were 128 550 places for skilled migrants to gain entry due to their work or business skills.

To be chosen for the family stream a person must be sponsored (supported) by a member of their family who is already an Australian resident. Most family stream migrants are the husbands, wives or fiancés of Australian citizens or permanent residents. In 2013-2014, there were 60 885 places for family migrants sponsored by family members already in Australia.

Living Together

The last 60 years of immigration have had a very visible effect on Australia. Groups of people coming to a new land will naturally want to live close to other people from the same background, especially when they speak a language other than English.

The places these communities have gathered to live have changed dramatically. An older example is Dixon Street in Sydney, known as Chinatown, which has had the appearance of an Asian city for many years. In the 1970s and 1980s Cabramatta (Sydney) and Springvale (Melbourne) became centres for the Vietnamese community. Likewise, Leichhardt (Sydney) and Carlton (Melbourne) became centres for the Italian community in the 1950s and 1960s.

These places have become popular with all Australians, who are often attracted by the restaurants and to experience grocery stores which provide a wonderful range of food. In fact, immigration has influenced many aspects of everyday Australian life, including music, film, television, art, architecture, cuisine, sport and recreation.

Australians Born Overseas

In June 2014 Australia's estimated population was about 23.5 million people. Of these, nearly six million were born overseas. This is more than a quarter of the population. More than half a million have come as displaced persons or refugees, but the majority of new arrivals have come as migrants.

According to the 2011 census, the largest group of overseas-born residents living in Australia were born in the United Kingdom (1.1 million), followed by New Zealand (483 000), China (319 000), India (295 000) and Italy (185 000).



Sydney's Chinatown