

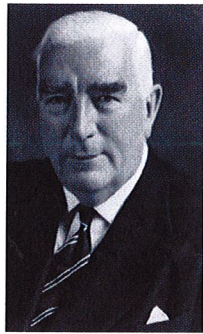
A Multicultural Society

While the White Australia policy (see page 54) was officially scrapped in 1973, it had been becoming less important since the mid-1960s. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, relaxed some of its provisions. His replacement, Harold Holt, began to accept more migrants from other parts of the world, starting with a larger number of people from Turkey in 1967.

White Australia Policy Ends

The next change happened in 1973, when the new Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, officially ended the White Australia policy. No-one was to be excluded from coming to Australia simply because of their race or colour. The term used to describe the new approach to immigration was multiculturalism.

Prime Ministers Who Made a Difference



Robert Menzies
(1949 – 1966)



Harold Holt
(1966 – 1967)



Gough Whitlam
(1972 – 1975)

At first, most non-European migrants came from South America and the Middle East. Many of these came from Lebanon, which was suffering civil war at the time. The next major influx came in the mid-1970s, as thousands of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos came to Australia following the end of the Vietnam War. By the mid-1980s Australia had accepted more than 70 000 migrants from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Changing Australia

The influx of migrants from all parts of the world changed Australia greatly. Migrants contributed abundantly to their new home, and the majority of Australians welcomed people from other places with good humour and tolerance. The contribution and diversity of people from other countries who have made Australia their home is widely recognised and celebrated at special events such as Harmony Day.

There was more to multiculturalism than just allowing non-European people to come to Australia. People were no longer expected to change their way of life as soon as they arrived, but were encouraged to preserve parts of their original culture. Organisations were formed to promote the language and heritage of different national groups.

Radio and television stations were established by the government to cater for people who spoke different languages, and government information was provided in many languages, not just in English. Various government offices and charities were established to assist immigrants, as well as promote tolerance for different cultures and the idea that Australia could be made a better place by accepting the newest Australians.