Immigration growth

Following Federation, the Federal Government passed laws that allowed Australia to decide, based on race, whether new migrants were suitable as residents of Australia. This legislation became known as the 'White Australia Policy'. It remained in practice until the early 1970s.

Although there was no actual law called the 'White Australia Policy', two pieces of legislation that were passed in 1901, along with similar policies, became collectively known as the 'White Australia Policy'. Those two laws were the **Immigration Restriction Act** and the **Pacific Island Labourers Act**.

Post-war migration

During World War II, the Australian Government realised there was a need for a larger population. There were a number of reasons for this:

- concern over a possible invasion. Australia’s small population would be unable to protect the coastline from an invasion
- a low birthrate during the 1930s meant fewer people joining the workforce
- death and injury to Australians who had fought in the war meant the existing workforce was now smaller
- a larger workforce was needed to continue the expansion of the manufacturing industry which had grown during the war.
Activity 1

Answer the following questions.

1 Why do you think there was a low birthrate during the 1930s?

2 During World War II, Australia was nearly invaded by which country?

Check your responses by going to the suggested answers section.

To increase Australia’s population, the Federal Government introduced a new immigration policy in 1945. It became known as the ‘populate or perish’ policy.

The government was worried that, unless there was a large increase in the population, Australia would suffer. The purpose of the ‘populate or perish’ policy was to encourage an extra 70 000 migrants to come to Australia each year. The government preferred British migrants. However, there weren't enough British people willing and able to migrate to Australia. So, for the first time, the government encouraged non-British migrants.

This idea was met with some opposition, especially when it became known that many of the new migrants would be coming from countries such as Italy and Germany who had recently been at war with Australia. Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell tried to ease the fears of the Australian public by promising ‘for every foreign migrant, there will be ten from the United Kingdom’. He also guaranteed that Australia was only seeking ‘white’ migrants.
Australia’s population in the 1940s

Before Calwell’s ‘populate or perish’ policy began in 1945, the majority of Australia’s migrants came from the United Kingdom. Have a look at the following table and see what the 1947 census tells you about the make-up of the Australian population at that time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Percentage of Australian population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas of Europe</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Australia’s population by birthplace, 1947**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics website (accessed June 2005)

Activity 2

Colour in the circle that best answers the questions based on the table.

1. In 1947 the majority of Australia’s population was born in:
   a. the United Kingdom
   b. Australia
   c. America
   d. Oceania.
2 You can deduce from the table that:
   a the majority of Australia’s migrants were born in Asia  ○
   b Asians only made up a small percentage of the population  ○
   c the number of migrants from Asia was increasing  ○
   d the White Australia Policy was unsuccessful.  ○

3 The largest number of migrants in 1947 had come from:
   a the United Kingdom  ○
   b New Zealand  ○
   c Europe  ○
   d America.  ○

Check your responses by going to the suggested answers section.

Assistance schemes

The government set a target of increasing the population by two per cent each year. There was a natural increase of one per cent through births, the other one per cent (70,000) was to come from immigration. To encourage such a large number of people, the government had to provide incentives. They did this by creating a series of assistance schemes.

The post-war assistance schemes included:
• Ex-Servicemen’s Assisted Passage Scheme
• Displaced Persons Scheme
• ‘Bring out a Briton’
• ‘Nest Egg’ Scheme

as well as providing assisted passages for other suitable migrants.

The following poster illustrates how British migration was encouraged.
Activity 3

Write ‘true’ or ‘false’ in response to these statements. If a statement is false, write the correct statement in a full sentence.

1. Job skills were not necessary to migrate to Australia.

2. The poster is only advertising free passages.

Check your responses by going to the suggested answers section.

Assisted passages

The government offered financial assistance to a number of different groups of people who wished to migrate to Australia. One program was the Ex-Servicemen’s Assisted Passage Scheme. In 1946, an agreement was made between the Australian and British governments which allowed ex-servicemen from the United Kingdom and their families to migrate to Australia for free. In 1947, it was expanded to include servicemen from the United States, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Belgium and Denmark.

As well as addressing this offer to ex-servicemen, the Australian Government encouraged other British subjects by offering them passage for £10. This very cheap fare led to those who took up the offer being known as the ‘ten pound tourists’.

Work contracts

Australia was also promoted in other European countries as an ideal home for skilled migrants. Although the government preferred British subjects, migrants from other European countries were also admitted. Those who received an assisted passage had to sign a work contract. In this, they agreed to work as directed by the Australian Government for a period of between one and two years.

Over the page is an example of a work contract signed by Dutch migrants. The print might be hard to read, so the most important points have been explained for you.
Activity 4

List the three things that Dutch migrants agreed to do.

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

Check your responses by going to the suggested answers section.

Refugees

Today we have many refugees, or 'displaced persons' as they were called in the 1950s, hoping to settle in Australia. During our own lifetimes, many of us have become aware that others who have come to live in Australia have fled from their homelands because conditions are so bad they are afraid to stay. Often these people have experienced terrible violence and awful conditions before deciding they must leave their home to survive. Many of them have come to Australia to attempt to begin a new life.

During World War II, the Nazis killed approximately six million Jewish people and many other hundreds of thousands were imprisoned and tortured by the Germans. This terrible period in history became known as the Holocaust.

Australia began receiving refugees from Nazi Germany before World War II began. Large numbers from that country were also accepted after the war. Since then, we have accepted refugees escaping from war and other forms of violence. They have come from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, China, East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other places.

Immediately after World War II, the Australian Government allowed Jewish people to migrate to Australia on ‘humanitarian grounds’. This policy was changed in 1947 when Calwell announced The Displaced Persons Scheme with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), which was administered by the United Nations.

Following the agreement with the United Nations, the Government decided to place a limit on the number of Jewish people it would accept. Only 25 per cent of the Displaced Persons transported here were allowed to be Jewish.

The Displaced Persons Scheme

Displaced persons were brought to Australia for free. The IRO arranged transport and charged the Australian Government £10 (about 25 dollars) for each refugee brought to Australia. In exchange for their travel, displaced persons agreed to work for a period of between one and two years wherever the government directed. It was expected that the refugees would work in those jobs that Australians didn’t want to do. They were often sent to rural areas where employers badly needed workers.
The smaller population in the country areas of Australia meant that people had a harder time adjusting to the large casualty and death rate as a result of the war. This also made it more difficult for country employers to replace lost workers than it was for those in the city.

By sending new migrants to country areas, the government avoided large protests from the unions, who were worried the new migrants would take the jobs of Australians who had survived the war. The unions were also concerned that refugees would work for less pay, thus putting native-born Australians out of work.

Before starting work, displaced persons and other migrants on work contracts usually spent time in a migrant camp such as Bonegilla (near Wodonga on the Victoria/NSW border). While at the camp, migrants were given some lessons in basic English and learnt other things about living in Australia.

The Displaced Persons Scheme brought 170 000 migrants to Australia between 1947 and 1952. These refugees came from the war-torn areas of the Second World War and countries in Eastern Europe such as Yugoslavia, Poland, Latvia, Hungary and the Ukraine, where communism was spreading. The IRO was replaced by the International Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in 1952. This new body continued to assist people to migrate to Australia by offering financial assistance.

‘Bring out a Briton’

In the mid 1950s the government realised that, although many European migrants were arriving, not as many were coming from Britain as had been anticipated.

One reason for this was that immediately after the war there was a shortage of ships that could be used for transporting people or for any other purpose. By the time ships became available, many of the future British migrants had re-settled in other areas and were no longer interested in moving to Australia. The government realised they needed to establish a new program specifically aimed at encouraging British migrants.

In 1957 the ‘Bring out a Briton’ campaign was launched. Australian employers informed the government as to the types of workers that were needed. The government then provided assisted passages for those British workers who were guaranteed a job when they arrived in Australia.
The campaign also encouraged the Australian public to name British friends and relatives who wanted to migrate to Australia. The government agreed to provide assisted passage to these British migrants if their Australian friends guaranteed to provide them with accommodation on their arrival.

The ‘Nest Egg’ Scheme

Another scheme that was launched late in the 1950s was the ‘Nest Egg’ Scheme. The idea of this scheme was again to attract British migrants.

British families who had more than £500 could apply to the Federal Government for an assisted passage without being either ex-servicemen or nominated through the ‘Bring out a Briton’ scheme.

The ‘Nest Egg’ Scheme encouraged migrants with their own money to move to Australia. The benefit of this was that new migrants wouldn’t need to rely on the government when they arrived in Australia. As a result, many English families sold their family home and other assets to make the £500 necessary for a cheap passage to Australia.

Go to the exercises section and complete Exercises 1.1 to 1.3 as directed by your teacher.