

Journeys to Australia

*From one home
to another*

A collection of inspiring and unique stories by residents of Hobsons Bay who migrated to Australia between 1950 and 2012 or were born to migrant parents. All share the common experience of leaving one home to come to another.

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Journeys to Australia: From one home to another

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the *Journeys to Australia: From one home to another* project.

For many years, Hobsons Bay has proudly been home to a large multicultural community with over a third of residents born overseas. At Hobsons Bay City Council we celebrate this cultural richness. And we make sure all our policies and actions give everyone the same opportunities to participate fully in the civic life of the city, regardless of their native language or religious cultural background.

Giving newcomers a sense of belonging is an aim that was enshrined in the Council's *Multicultural Policy* that was adopted last year. The policy recognises that our residents' heritage is an integral part of Hobsons Bay's history and identity and the importance of celebrating and showcasing this cultural diversity.

Journeys to Australia: From one home to another is a wonderful book that does just that. This publication features more than 60 stories of the migrant experience. The stories will help to build harmony and understanding and instill a sense of pride in the many culturally and linguistically diverse communities that make up our wonderful city.

This book was launched on Harmony Day - Thursday, 21st March 2013 – and I encourage everyone to take a minute

or two to learn how their neighbours first felt about Australia and how they adapted to a new country and culture.

Cr Angela Altair
Mayor, Hobsons Bay City Council

Cambodia



Kunthy Chun

Arrived 2006

My name is Kunthy. I come from Cambodia. I am 34 years old. I married in 2005 and in 2006 I flew to Australia with my husband. My husband is an Australian citizen and we met in Cambodia and married.

We have two children – two boys and they are six and two years of age. My eldest son speaks really good English and really good Cambodian.

My parents were farmers. We had chickens, ducks and cows and many different vegetables. We had a good life. My parents have six children and I am the only one here in Australia.

In Cambodia I worked as a cleaner in a city hospital. I had to work very hard and received \$70 per month. Now I look after my family and so I don't work in Australia.

I am very lucky that I live in Australia. I love it here.

China



Cherry Zhang

Arrived 2010

Before I came to Australia, I'd seen a TV program called *'Top 10 Poisonous Animals of the World'* with all my family. We found that most of the dangerous animals are in Australia, such as the red-back spider, box jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus and all kinds of snakes. This made them, particularly my mum, worry about me a lot since I have migrated to Australia.

I kept telling them that their worries were ridiculous. I've been in Australia nearly two years now and I've been to different parts of Australia. I've seen none of the poisonous animals mentioned above but the cutest wildlife: kangaroos, llamas, penguins, koalas and other many different animals.

Every time when I reminisce about the first day when I came to Australia, the first sight of Australia for me is a real charming memory. I arrived at Melbourne Airport in October 2010, which is about three weeks after the Chinese Moon-Cake Day. It was getting colder in Changsha, on the other hand, it was getting warmer in Melbourne. All flowers were blooming. What a colourful, beautiful garden country Australia is!

I enjoy my life every day, but still there's something very arduous I have to face: language, jobs, money and homesickness.

Croatia



Danica Bosnjakovic

Arrived 1970

*For a better life
She took me far away
My mother is my hero
Until I die!*



I came from Croatia in 1970. It is a beautiful country and I will never forget my happy childhood. One day my mum made the decision to go to Australia for a better life and most importantly for a better future for her children. My father was the only one working and the monthly salary was not enough to provide everything for his family. In Australia we could get work and this is the only reason that we started our life in Australia.

On 11th of May I left my little town and it was very hard to say goodbye to my friends and family. When the train arrived, I didn't want to go in, but I didn't have a choice. I will never forget that day, my heart was broken. Lucky I had my childhood friend and she travelled with me to Zagreb, capital city of Croatia. That was forty-two years ago and I haven't seen her since.

EL Salvador



Maria Granadeno

Arrived 1990

I came to Australia in 1990 and arrived at Maribyrnong Hostel about 12.30pm by bus on the 5th of March, we were very tired. I was happy to meet my neighbour. The second day I got a lot of information about my new country.

My husband and my three children came with me. We all travelled to Australia by aeroplane. We stopped in Los Angeles for one day and stayed in a hotel, later we took another aeroplane at 11.00pm from Los Angeles to Australia. It was hard in the aeroplane. My little son was sick and always crying, but I gave him one tablet of panadol and he slept.

My first impressions and early memories of Australia were that I saw very big spaces and big houses.



I came to Australia with all my family to start a new life with my husband. He found a job with ACME OIL, after that I worked in a kindergarten in Altona Meadows. Later I became an Australian citizen in 1993. I worked in a cafe in the city. I began learning English at Altona Green Community Centre and now I am studying at Williamstown Community Centre.

France



Elisa Lagan

Arrived 2012

I came from France and I arrived in Australia for the first time two weeks ago. Nobody came with me but I travelled with my friend who I met in France.

I came by plane and I had two stop-overs. The first stop-over was in London and the second was in Singapore. Then I arrived at Melbourne airport.



When we got out of the airport, I saw the most beautiful sky that I have ever seen. It was approximately 5.00am, the sun was coming up and there were a lot of very small clouds. I have also never seen Eucalyptus trees and as there was not enough light, the trees were like shadows in a pink and yellow sky (my painting of this is pictured below).

I came with two goals, the first is to learn and improve my English, the second is working in the same job that I had in France. I would like to see the different cultural habits and if I could make friends that would be very nice. My first challenge was understanding people when they spoke, then the challenge became being understood by others.

I joined the English course to meet people but I have just arrived so I have not been here for enough time to really be involved in Australian society.

In my country it was only fifteen minutes by bike to many things in the city. Here distances are very different, places are far away from each other. But I don't miss population density. My cat and my friends miss me.



Greece

Anamnis

Recollections of the Greek community

The following Greek stories derive from the *Anamnis* Project. *Anamnis* is a contemporary collection of stories, photos, precious objects and the memories they trigger. Hobsons Bay City Council and Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre worked in partnership to present this exhibition in 2011.



Sofi Georgas

Sofi Georgas was born in 2000 in Australia. I am 11 years old. I was born in Australia. My parents were born in Australia. My grandparents were born in Kos, Greece.

I'm proud to be a Greek. I go to Greek School and celebrate all the special days such as Easter, Christmas and the Greek national days on 25th March and 28th October.

I remember dressing up in the Greek National colours of blue and white and performing for the Greek School in front of people. We celebrate a lot of Saints days and we go to church to remember Saint Sofia, Saint Paul and Saint Mary.

My grandfather's statue of Hippocrates of Kos is from the same island my grandfather is from. It is important to me because this is my family history and heritage.

Antonios Georgoulis

Arrived 1974

Antonios Georgoulis was born in 1956 in Langada Chios, Greece.

I finished primary school at the age of 12 in my hometown of Langada Chios.

I did a three year apprenticeship in welding but it was impossible to find work in my hometown or in Athens, so I decided to try a second apprenticeship as a Cook's assistant on a cargo ship, a chance to see the world. This was 1971.

I only lasted a year, life on the ship was hard and it was not easy work, so I went back home to look for any work I could. Still no luck.

In 1973 I took a job as assistant steward on a cargo ship, *The Sea Guardian*. When I left Chios I put on a record and left it playing for my mum. The song was "If I die in a foreign land – that is when I'll come home". I knew this voyage was to discover a new hometown for me.

After 12 months sailing, the Captain gave the news that the next stop was Australia. We arrived in Melbourne in December 1974. I visited some relatives and friends from back home and met some lovely girls.

It was only a short stay in Melbourne but as we sailed for Sydney I couldn't get Melbourne out of my mind. Or, really, I couldn't get a particular girl out of my mind. As we sailed to Sydney, I was planning my escape!

In Sydney, I met some Chians (from the Island of Chios) and asked them to purchase me a plane ticket to Melbourne. Two days later I had the plane ticket in my hand. I waited for the ship to depart, and then headed straight to the airport.

In Melbourne, there was a public holiday coming up – Moomba – so I decided to go. Would you believe it? At Moomba I heard a voice calling my name. I turned round and it was Victoria, the girl I couldn't get out of my mind. The one I had jumped ship for.

We met for lunch the following day but don't ask me what we had to eat - I was too busy gazing into her eyes. One day I phoned Victoria to tell her I had been arrested and the police were to deport me in two days time. She said "No they can't do that. I will rescue you!"

I went to Victoria's house to ask her father for her hand in marriage. My motive was clear: she was a nice girl and my passport to stay in Australia.

Her parents said yes, and so did Victoria. There was just one thing eating away at me: I did not tell her parents that I was an illegal immigrant.

When her parents realised I was an illegal immigrant, it was full steam ahead with plans; two weeks later we were engaged, two weeks after that we were married on the Queen's Birthday, 14th June 1975.

Victoria had never even asked what my surname was: yet she married me. One year later I had a wife, a daughter, a mortgage, three jobs and a bicycle.

Thirty-seven years later I have one daughter (35), one son (27), two granddaughters (nine and four) and for the past eight years me and my wife have been self-supporting. I can say I am happy with the decision I made to jump ship in Sydney in December 1974 and to call Australia home.

Vivien Karabinas

Vivien Karabinas was born to Greek Parents in 1967 in Williamstown, Australia.

My mum and dad (Marina and Sotirios Karabinas) came to Melbourne in 1965 aged 18 and 25. They settled in Yarraville and were married the following year at the Yarraville Greek Orthodox church.

My name is Vivien Karabinas but on my birth certificate my full Greek name is 'Paraskevi Konstantina Karabinas', as the custom in Greek culture is to use the names of both grandmothers.

My first language was Greek because back then, everybody around me spoke Greek, I only began to pick up the English language when I started primary school. Mum and dad were keen for us to continue our Greek, so along with many other children of Greek migrants we went to Greek school. For a long time I resented the fact that I had to go to Greek school because there was so much extra homework. I gave mum a very hard time...sorry mum! Having completed year 12 Greek I'm delighted mum persisted: to this day I can still speak and read Greek.

The things I loved most about growing up in my Greek home was all the fantastic food mum made. It didn't matter how many people were in our house mum always managed to feed us all.

Our house was always full of people gathered around eating, drinking, smoking (as you did in the 70's), singing

and dancing to Greek music. It was a pretty loud house and I guess this was very normal for us. I have very fond memories of celebrations, particularly around Easter and Christmas. The wonderful smells coming from mum's kitchen; all those yummy cakes and sweet breads, the lamb on the spit, the 'Pappa' (Greek Priest), the Greek church and all those Greek families gathered around doing things together and feeling like you were very much a part of a community, a Greek community.

I have been to Greece three times now. It's nice to get a sense of the place where mum and dad grew up and meet my large extended Greek family. I was 10 when I went for the first time and I remember it with such fondness. We used to play all day with my cousins and there was so much space to run around and just be a kid in mum and dad's village. I know that if mum and dad had said back then that we would be staying in Greece, I would have happily done so.

Here I am now an Australian–Greek (as I like to call myself) living in Altona and raising my own family. I am married to a non-Greek man and have two beautiful daughters. I know their experience will be very different to mine as they are not growing up in a Greek home like I did. I do want my girls however to know their mum's Greek origins and telling them stories about my life and keeping up some good Greek traditions is a wonderful way to do this with them. I hope one day that we can all travel to Greece and for my daughters to gain a broader understanding of all things Greek.

Dimitra Koukouzikas

Arrived 1965

I arrived in Australia in 1965 with my husband and children; one child was six years old and one was only four and a half months old.

I brought with me some of the things I had embroidered for my dowry: they are now 65 years old. My wish is to hand them down to my grandchildren.

Where I grew up we were snowed in for six months of the year, isolated from everything with nothing to do but embroider for our dowries. It was very different for girls in those days. Sometimes we sold embroidery to the Americans to get some extra money.

In Greece, the bride-to-be must present her dowry to her mother-in-law. She had to lay out all her embroidery for her mother-in-law to inspect. The more you had, the better.

Aspasia Markopoulous

Arrived 1964

Aspasia Markopoulous was born in 1937 in Prote, Greece.

I was married on the 13th June 1957 in Greece. My wedding gown is important as my mother and I handmade it: weaving, sewing and embroidering it every night.

I remember the day after my wedding, my husband lifted me up onto his bicycle and we cycled to his village, it took one and a half hours! In those years, Greece was poor and finding work was very hard so in 1964 my husband, my two children and I travelled to Australia on the *ROMA* ship to start a new life.

I have no regrets. This is my country now.

Anastasia Moritz

Anastasia Moritz was born to Greek parents in 1966 in Australia.

I was born in Australia. My parents migrated here in 1962. In 1979 I went on a holiday for the very first time with my family to Greece. I was 14 years old. We were based in a village where my parents came from up north in Greece. We stayed for four months and I had the best time, we travelled around and saw beautiful parts of Greece. I made new friends and I loved meeting all the family.

Those memories have remained for me. In particular, I remember meeting 'Sophi'. Our friendship is still going strong. I met her again when I went back in 1990 at the age of 25, it was magic! I was older and able to do things freely. I had the best time of my life.

Greece is a beautiful country to visit. I am hoping to go back one day with my own family. I have kept up with all the Greek traditions and my daughters are following, which I am very happy about.

Theodora Moritz

Theodora Moritz was born in 1998 in Melbourne, Australia.

I'm 13 years old. I was born in Australia with a Greek mother and Greek grandparents, who migrated here in 1962.

I love growing up as a part of the Greek community and sharing in my Greek culture. I listen and dance to Greek music; I make and eat yummy Greek food; I celebrate Greek national days; I go to Greek school.

I love Greek school. Some of my best friends are there and we have lots of fun. We have lots of stuff to talk about and lots of things in common as we're all Greek and share in the same cultural experiences.

It's especially funny to compare our grandparents who are very proud stereotypical Greeks much like Toula's parents in the film "My Big Fat Greek Wedding". My friends at English school think it's cool that I'm Greek. They all love my food especially the Spanakopita and the sweets!

I love making Spanakopita with my Yiayia (grandmother) in the little sewing room behind the garage. It's a representation of good Greek food. It takes time and hard work to make but it is delicious. Overall it's a great experience living here being Greek-Australian.

Pam Mostarac

Arrived 1972

I came from Greece and I arrived in Australia in 1972 by plane. My sister sponsored me to come to see her and her family and their new adopted country. I came alone because I was single at that time.



I flew to Australia from Greece. It was great distance from one country to another. It depends on the stop-overs, it takes approximately twenty-two hours to fly 14,946 kilometres.

My first impression wasn't very nice; I saw a dark city with only a few people on the streets. I never dreamed that life in Australia at the time would have so many challenges. The language was difficult and I wanted to go back home.

Eventually I started to communicate with other people and I got involved in society. I started to work in Sydney Road Brunswick. It was a hosiery factory where many women assembled tights and stockings and I got to know them, but always in the back of my mind were my family and friends and my beautiful country.

Everything changed when I was introduced to a very nice and handsome man, and I got married and had two children. I have learnt to love this country a lot and I am proud to call Australia my home.

Milton Papachatzakis

Arrived 1962

Milton Papachatzakis was born in 1943 in Crete, Greece.

When I finished high school at the age of 18 I decided to embark on a merchant navy ship as an apprentice captain.

My ambition to become captain didn't last very long. Soon discovered the seafaring life wasn't for me. I had to find a way to overturn my wrong decision but this was almost impossible. The boat was chartered by the Chinese for a year, so I wouldn't see Greece for a year and a half.

We went from Buenos Aires, Argentina to China, across to Vancouver and back to Shanghai. Then the captain informed us that our next stop was to pick up grain in Fremantle, Australia.

Many thoughts were in my mind but those kinds of thoughts were for brave men with nerves of steel, I wasn't sure if I was that kind of man. I'd heard that Australia, like the USA, was a country with opportunities but I wasn't sure if I was a person who could jump ship at 19 years of age and start a new life in a new country.

After much thought, I decided to disregard the risk. I jumped ship at Fremantle in October 1962 to look for the better life I had promised myself.

Finding a job was hard, so I had to take a job in an asbestos mine at Wittenoom Gorge, 1200 kms north of Perth. Mesothelioma caused the death of thousands of men after being exposed to asbestos. I was fortunate enough not to contract the disease despite being exposed to the stuff on a daily basis for over a year. I praise God for this. After I was given my legal Australian identity through the recommendations of the local sheriff, I met Sotira who later became my wife and we had two children.

Our work in the early years was in factories in Melbourne and then in our own business. We worked tirelessly in order to provide our children with a good education so that they could become worthy people in today's society.

I am now 67 years old and have no regrets of how I have lived my life and am happy that I made the decision 50 years ago to jump ship and make Australia my homeland.

Aphrodite Papakalodouka

Arrived 1965

Aphrodite Papakalodouka was born in 1938 in Salonika, Grevena, Greece.

I came to Australia in 1965 with my husband and 2 year old daughter. I had always wanted to come. I have always

loved everything Australian; even when I was young and the soccer was playing I always supported Australia.

I have always loved this country. When we came here I cried for 2 years. We had no English and no support. I felt it was hopeless.

People called us 'bloody wogs'. In Greece my husband was a shoemaker and I was a hairdresser. Here I cried. We have more freedom in Australia. We are more Greek than the Greek people. I have two countries. I love Greece, but I love Australia too. Australia is the best country in the world.

Georgia Psarianos

Georgia Psarianos was born in 1998 in Melbourne, Australia. I'm 13 years old. I was born in Australia in Melbourne.

I am Greek in all parts of my body. I love my family and travelling to Greece. I travel to Greece about every two years and every time I go I meet my family. My family isn't rich, we just save up.

Growing up in Australia is OK. I like the things I can do here and I have the most best friends I could ever have but I will always remember my family in Greece.

When I travel to Greece I hate the aeroplane ride. It always makes me sick so I think of the fun I'm going to have when I land in Greece. That feeling is the best feeling I could ever have.

The first time I went to Greece I was two years old and I don't remember much. The last time I went I was 12 and the memories are amazing but unfortunately the memories are fading away.

I got my 2004 Athens Olympics mascots in Greece. Greece won the Olympics that year. I'm proud of being Greek and I was fortunate enough to be in Greece at that time.

Matina Sachinidis

Arrived 1957

Matina Sachinidis was born in 1932 in Sparta, Greece.

When I finished high school I wanted to work as a teacher, but my parents refused. They didn't want me to leave home and move to another village. I rebelled and in 1957 moved all the way to Australia where I became a teacher and taught Greek.

I wasn't married when I came here and brought with me some of the embroidery I had made in high school for my trousseau (dowry). It was really common for girls to embroider fancy items for their trousseau. Some of my pieces took six months to make.

It was sad to arrive but I was fortunate to move in with two friends who were already here.

George Saïd

Arrived 1962

George Saïd was born to Greek parents in 1933 in Alexandria, Egypt.

We came out to Australia in 1962 as ten-pound Poms on the *S.S. ORION*, a P&O ship from England. Having been placed under house arrest and expelled from Egypt six years earlier, we couldn't disembark when we went through the Suez Canal, so all I could do was look at the land of my birth. I was responsible for my wife and two children and I felt like driftwood. We had no country, no home, no neighbours, no job, no income and a whole month at sea to think about that.

I brought my worry beads with me to learn how to decrease my concerns. My wife's sister and my brother together with their families met us at Station Pier, Port Melbourne.

Our greatest memory was the shock of arriving in Altona with its unmade roads and a house with an outside dunny: we thought we were going backwards.

Helen Saïd

Arrived 1962

Helen Saïd is 52 years old and was born in London, England.

Born to Greek parents, Helen came to Australia in 1962 when she was four years old. Schooled in Australia, Helen was really awakened to her Greek heritage in her teens, particularly by her cousin Popi from the island of Chios, Greece.

This led to a great interest in Greek culture and her family history, particularly the story of the Saïd's long journey to Australia. Helen tells their story in her book *War, Riches and Ruin*.

War, Riches and Ruin

By Helen Saïd

...the Suez Canal was being nationalised... we were about to descend into a nightmare of dislocation and loss in the face of senseless war and political upheaval.

Australia beckoned the seafaring Saïds who had lived everywhere but belonged nowhere.

War, Riches and Ruin traces the Saïd family from 1881 through the

Ottoman Empire, Equatorial Africa,
war time France, the Suez Canal
and immigration to Altona.

...I was holding onto our life's
possessions, two suitcases of
clothes and five worthless Egyptian
pounds, as I led our way through the
maze of Heathrow Airport on our
way to Australia. Maroula was
carrying our fifteen-month old
daughter Tassie.

Maroula Saïd

Arrived 1962

Maroula Saïd was born to a Greek father and English mother in Cairo, Egypt.

Unhappy living in England in the 1960's, my husband, two daughters and I came to Australia in 1962 as ten-pound Poms.

I never met my grandmother but I have a beautiful tablecloth that she embroidered about 150 years ago. It's a family heirloom that has travelled with me from Egypt to England to Australia.

My sister's (Irene Vecris) painting of an Aboriginal reminds me of Australia being a country with a diversity of cultures. It also makes me think of my older sister who was an artist and an art teacher at Mount St Joseph Catholic School in Altona.

My mother gave me an ancient coin of the Greek King of Egypt when I got married in 1954. It had been given to her by her best friend in Cyprus many years before. My mother embellished the coin with a gold garland and a pin on the back to turn it into a brooch.

Having been a family heirloom in my mother's friend's family, it has been handed down the generations since the Greek King's (Ptolemy IV Philometor) rule of Egypt from 180-145BC. It is 2045 years old.

Elpis Vecris

Elpis Vecris was born to Greek Parents in 1963 in Australia.

My father came to Australia in 1958 to look for a better life. He started working at the Victorian Railways in Spencer Street. Whilst there he met another Greek man who knew a family in Greece with a daughter who was unmarried.

My father started to write to her. They exchanged photos of themselves and he asked her to come to Australia. She left her own country to start a new life in Australia.

My father and his new bride fell in love and got married on the 20th of September 1959. They lived in Williamstown all their lives very happily.

Stephen Vecris

Stephen Vecris was born to Greek parents in 1960 in Moonee Ponds, Australia.

I remember growing up as part of a large extended family there were lots of weddings, lots of gatherings, lots of picnics. There was always lots of cooking, of all different types of food.

I remember listening to stories of my family's country of birth and listening to all kinds of music, particularly my parents singing Greek songs. I remember my dad bribing me with a small taste of beer when I spoke Greek.

Despite growing up in Australia, I even ended up marrying a Greek. My mother, Irene Vecris, who was an art teacher at Mount St Joseph Girls School in Altona, gave us her drawing *Anemones* as a wedding gift.

Eleni Vogiatzi

Arrived 1962

Eleni Vogiatzi was born in 1938 in Greek Macedonia.

I came to Australia in 1962. There was real poverty in Greece at the time and no jobs.

I brought my grandmother's handmade doilie with me, to remember her. My mother died when I was one year old and my grandmother brought me up in the early years. It's the only thing left I have of my grandmother's and it's very beautiful. She was very talented and lived until she was 105 years old.

She died when I was eight years old. After that my father, and later my stepmother brought me up. They were very good to me. I've worked hard all my life. In Greece I worked like a man, very hard.

In Australia I worked in a shoe shop, then in a meat factory for 17 years, until I got RSI of the wrist and had to stop. After that I worked at the Footscray Market shelling scallops, even though it was hard on my wrist. I worked hard and have had some health problems but I've never asked for anything.

If you ask me where is my country? My country is here.

India



Hari Iyer
Arrived 2006

For nearly 20 years of my life Australia for all practical purposes was *Terra Australis Incognita* (*The unknown land of the South*). Remember these were the years from 1980s to the 2000s, the days before cheap telephony, cable TV, high speed internet and Google street view. Australia as much as we take ourselves seriously now, is such a happy go lucky place that it's never in the news overseas for anything.

We don't cause trouble, we don't go bankrupt, we don't have revolutions and coups every few years, our leaders until recently anyway didn't go around the world preaching economic gospel to other countries. We just go our happy way, living and letting live. So as far as the overseas media was concerned Australia didn't exist.

My earliest memory of Australia was in geography lessons and world maps, where it was shown as a significant producer of dairy products along with and about as equally important as New Zealand. Slowly as the years went by and we learnt of countries and capitals in general knowledge, Australia was famous as a choice for a trick question in general knowledge as we don't have our biggest and most famous city Sydney, as our capital, that honour instead going to Canberra.

Then came the cricket world cup in 1992 where Australia beat India in Brisbane by ONE RUN in a very close match.

This was when Dean Jones and Allan Border became indelibly etched as legends in my teenage mind. As the years passed by Australia from a far, always seemed like a friendly country with some awesome cricketers, only in the

news at New Years Eve fireworks or when there was India vs. Aus cricket.

As luck would have it I happened to major in a university, where a lot of seniors had migrated to Australia. I was friends with senior who had migrated here a couple of years before and he guided me through the whole process of getting skills recognised, English skills tested and applying for migration. In about two and a half years the whole process was through and I was ready with my bags packed.

At 25, life as I knew it was going to change big time, I'd never been on a plane, never even seen a plane from close quarters, never visited any country overseas and I'd just been granted a chance to change my life forever. I left from Mumbai on the 18th August 2006, on a direct Qantas flight from Mumbai to Sydney. On my way out through customs in India, the clerk upon realising that I was headed for Australia with a PR asked for *baksheesh* (*euphemism for outright bribery*), I refused, hoping vaguely that the days of giving bribes were now behind me.

I was travelling with a friend and it seemed to us like we were the only two first time fliers on the flight. Our flight over Australia was all during day time and we were reprimanded more than a couple of times by the airhostess to lower the blinds, lest the light coming in wake sleeping passengers. I was far too excited to be subdued by them.

The whole journey over Australia, I and my friend were glued to the windows with blankets over our heads so as to not let light in and disturb other passengers. The novelty of being in a plane for the first time, seeing clean parallel streets, long roads and rural cattle stations and the dry

outback and more importantly long patches of not seeing anybody on land from up above was like the excitement of a little kid in Disneyland.

The final highlight was of course when the pilot couldn't get landing spots at the airport and we spent 20 minutes circling above beautiful Sydney. That was my first view of the iconic harbour bridge and Opera house, and both were as impressive as I imagined them to be. As they did for thousands of migrants before me, they were icons of a new world, a developed one and far too different to the still developing world and the shanties surrounding the Mumbai Airport I'd left behind.

Australia represented the hope, reward and opportunity to establish a new life. A world where government is not corrupt, (most) ministers reply to letters sent to them, elections are fair, government employees don't expect bribes, and there is hardly any poverty.

As migrants with nothing but the clothes on our backs and a few friends for support we did pretty well in the first few months, at least we knew the language and one other thing. Life was good and it was only going to get better.

For my first job in the weeks after we came here, I was out door knocking the poorer suburbs in outer Sydney trying to flog utility contracts from dodgy electric companies that have long since gone bust.

No better way to learn about a new country and its people, than to be a salesman on the streets knocking stranger's doors. While I've always loved dogs having a few set upon you by irate home owners is not the best way to meet them in a new country. Anyone who hasn't door knocked strange doors trying to sell them something is missing a key

experience, for us it was like a rite of passage in the school of hard knocks. Lack of cars never deterred us for long, as rides were far too easy to hitch down the end of an outstretched thumb, Australians we felt were far too generous. In memory to those days I've never turned a door knocker down without first giving them a hearing, or passed by an outstretched thumb if I am in a position to give a ride. As they say it's all good for my *Karma*

Eventually I found good paying work, first temporary and eventually more permanent, long term and professional work based on experience and qualifications from overseas. Work that didn't involve trying to sell strangers, things that they didn't want to be sold. I moved around a few cities following work, and eventually settled in Melbourne. Melbourne has this amazing multicultural feel that is redefining what "Australian" looks like. In the past decades it was the Greeks and Italians and now it is the Indians and the Chinese.

With such a large expat population of Indians there is hardly anything missing be it in cuisine, places of worship or entertainment. The only thing that we still long for here is the people, the family and the old friends.

We are not without problems here for it would be too boring if we were satisfied with the status quo, but basic things that make life comfortable are such a given.

One cannot truly appreciate the basic comforts everyone has here till we have spent many years living overseas.

I became a citizen a few years later and over time somewhere inside my head a switch flipped in the way I thought of myself, still very much true to my Indian roots and feeling for the home country but now with a very

special spot for this faraway land that I now call home. I am waiting for some scientist to discover the spot in human brains, similar to the magnetic compass like spot they found in migrating albatrosses or homing pigeons where the place called home is etched. I have my guesses on this.

I believe the spot is etched in human brains between the school and early youth where a sense of ownership, belonging to the community, knowledge and pride of local history blend together in the young impressionable minds to develop patriotic feelings for the country.

Australia today is bending over backwards at every government and policy level to make it more accommodating for migrants and refugees of all kinds, perhaps to make amends for past wrongs or decades of white Australia policy. I for one wish it was the migrants who had the greater responsibility of learning the language, culture and assimilating into the general Australian way of life not the other way around.

To this effect, Australia day and Anzac day are not just public holidays in our household but are days to celebrate the opportunity we got to become Australians, to attend the parades, celebrations and festivities all around us.

To think of all the history that went behind making Australia what it is today, its Anglo Saxon heritage, its institutions, and the tolerant, secular and the civil society that gives us the opportunity to call ourselves *Australians*.

On a lighter note, one thing that is a bit more difficult to change than nationality is support of sporting teams. When

we went with friends to the MCG for the India - Aus T20 match last year, though us, parents wore Indian teams T Shirts and colours, my son sitting on my shoulders sported an Aussie T-shirt and colours. I can't wait for him to grow up so we can have the Bradman vs Tendulkar argument.

Italy



Rose (D'Abaco) Agosta

Arrived 1953

I arrived in Australia on December, 15th 1953 from a small town in Italy called Vizzini. I was nine years old. We came on a ship called *Sorrento*, and it took us one month of sea travel. I came to Australia with my mum, Vitina and my eldest brother Greg. My dad, Giuseppe was already in Australia. My dad had come earlier to the country to set up a new place for the family. He was a farmer and he rented a house and had it ready for us fully furnished when we arrived.



When I came to Australia, I was nine years old. I was overjoyed to see my dad again and I was happy when I saw my new house. At first it was a bit difficult because at school I could not speak English and I would get teased by the “Aussie kids.” They would tell me to go back to where I came from, and they would tease me about what I would have for lunch, as it was very different than vegemite and butter sandwiches! When I started to learn English, I stood up for myself and I would “belt up” the kids that were teasing me. I would often get into trouble with the nuns and would have to stay back after school and write pages and pages of “I must not do this again!”

I adapted to my life in Australia very well. I was intrigued by the language and I learnt it quickly, as I would often do a lot of chores for my mum. I remember going to the post office and asking for ‘blue letters,’ the people at the post office had no idea what I was talking about until I did an action of an aeroplane. It was only then that they realized I wanted

air mail letters. I would do the shopping for my mum on roller-skates, I loved my roller-skates!

When I finished school, I went to work at three different clothing factories. I became a supervisor with lots of hard work and training. In 1967, I got married at the age of 22. I have three children, a wonderful husband and I love my life here in Australia.



Vito Agosta

Arrived 1958

I arrived in Australia on the 29th December 1958 and I was 16 years old. I came from Italy on a ship called the

Neptunia with my mum and my sister who was 14 years old. My dad was already in Australia for three years and we came to join him here. I had never been on such a large ship and I was so grateful to be able to come to this new country not knowing what was in store for us.

As the ship got closer to Port Melbourne, I noticed the large city buildings, this was something that I had never seen before and I was very impressed. As soon as the Christmas holidays were over, I went to look for work because my family needed money. Back in my home country I use to spend a great amount of time in barber shops with the intention of becoming a barber one day.



At the age of 17, I got my first job in Australia at a barber shop in Victoria Street Richmond. I worked there for about three months and I would earn 3 ½ pounds (\$7) a week for a 44 hour working week.

I did this for six months however my family was in need of more money, so my dad asked me to find a job that would earn more money to pay our debts and support my family. So I decided to apply at a company called AGM (Australian Glass Manufacture in Spotswood). I told them that I was 21 years of age so that I could work shift work and get more money. I worked there for two years and I made enough money to help my family get rid of our debts.

Soon after, I went to look for a job that I always wanted to do - a barber. A major challenge that I faced was the language. My English was not that good and a friend of mine told me that there was a job in a barber shop that was located in 'Banana Ally' in Flinders Street Melbourne. I was given a temporary role for three months and then I ended up staying there for nine years from 1963 -1971.

The shops down Banana Ally were owned by the government and we were informed that they were going to be pulled down; therefore I finished up in



1971. After that I needed a change and I bought a butcher shop in Station Street Werribee in 1972 and I ran that business until 1977.

After many years of hard work I went back to my home country for a holiday with my lovely wife Rose and daughter Josie who was 10 years old.

When I came back to Australia on the 28th September 1978, I went back to my dream profession. I opened up a brand new business in 3A Bridge Street Werribee called 'Vic the Barber.' I was in business for 34 years and then I decided it was time to 'pull the pin.' At the age of 68 I retired.

Some of the challenges that I faced when I first arrived were that some people would call me wog and dago, they would tell me to go back to where I came from. As I didn't

understand the language, I would often laugh and they would get more aggressive.

Australia has given me the opportunity to fulfil all my dreams and with my dedication to work and family I have been married for 46 years to my lovely wife Rose and I have three beautiful daughters Josie, Vitina and Michelle.

I now contribute positively to the Australian society through my volunteer work at Iramoo Community Centre. My love for food and cooking is shared with other members of the community. I teach cooking classes and we cook for people with a disability on a monthly basis.

I miss the rest of my family in Italy; I miss my old friends and the places where I use to spend most of my younger years.

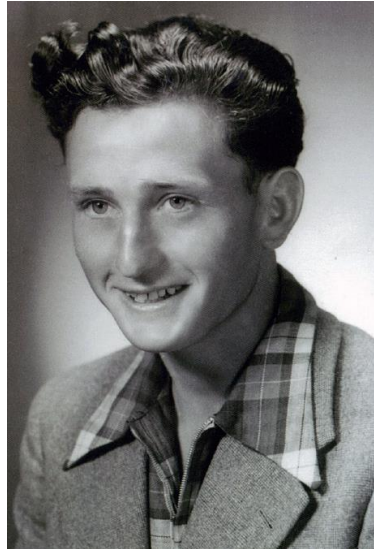


Nicola Basilone

Arrived 1950

I arrived in Australia from Circello Benevento on the 8th March 1950 on a ship called *The Continento*. When I first arrived in Melbourne, I was met by my sponsor and we took the train to Tatura.

After travelling 48 days on a ship, then on a train to Tatura I was very homesick for a couple of weeks. After making friends with my sponsor and his family, my outlook changed to excitement at starting a new life in a new country.



My dream was to have a good and prosperous life, the only challenge that I faced was the language barrier. I got involved in Australian culture by living the way they did, going to the pub once a week and meeting new people. The main thing that I miss about my home country is my family and friends.

Margherita Bencic

Arrived 1963

I arrived in Australia from a small town in Italy called Polla on the 18th May 1963. I arrived with my older sister Maria and we sailed on a ship called *The*



Roma. My first impressions were that there was nothing around us, just vacant land and plenty of rabbits. We could see the bay from where we were living.

There were not many roads or footpaths around the area when we arrived. My Australian dream was to live a better and more fulfilling life. Some of the challenges that I faced were finding work and speaking the language.

I became involved in the Australian society by finding work and meeting other people and learning the language. The thing I miss is the family that I left behind, my parents, six brothers, six sister-in-laws and many nephews and nieces.

Gregory D'Abaco

Arrived 1953

My name is Gregory D'Abaco. I came from Italy, Sicilia, from a small town called Vizzini. We departed on 15th November 1953 with my mum and sister Rose, I was seventeen years old. We came with a ship called *Sorrento*, it was transformed from a merchandise ship to a passenger ship. It was very big and high, the waves would make the ship rock side to side which made all of us sea sick. On the journey to Australia, there was a competition for the best dressed girl. For a bit of fun, I decided to enter and to my surprise I won! We did have some laughs!

Our first stop was Fremantle, I was very impressed. I remember the weather being very hot. After five days we arrived in Melbourne and both my sister and I were very happy to see our dad. My mother was crying with happiness because our family had finally been reunited. We have found all that we wished for in Australia. It was for me the country of the future, where all my family could live a better life.

Although the language was different, it did not take me long to learn it and I enjoyed learning to 'live' the Australian life. I have achieved all my dreams by working hard. I have also enjoyed life by following my passion for lawn bowls, this has given me the opportunity to mingle with English people and make some long lasting friends.

The only thing that I regret is that I missed my youth; I was seventeen when I came to Australia and I had to grow up really fast. I did not know what to expect from this new country but Australia has given me a great future and is the best country in the world.

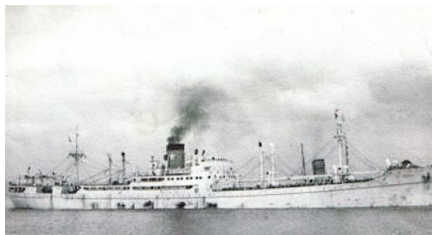


Giuseppe Gianchino

Arrived 1951

I arrived in Australia on the 11th January 1951 from Sicily with my grandparents, mum and three sisters. I arrived on a ship called the *Ravello*. It took forty days to arrive in Australia. I was too young to remember my first impressions of Australia, only that we lived in Ashwood where there were two houses, one shop and four orchids.

My dream of living in Australia was to purchase a house with a wife and family. The challenges that I faced were that I was teased for being Italian. We



were called names like “wog” and “dago.” These were things that I had to put up with as I was the only Italian at my primary school. Australia became a part of my life.

I worked hard at my many jobs; I had three jobs one time, juggling the hours and days of the week. At the age of 18, I joined the APEX club. At 22, I was conscripted to assist with the Vietnam conflict. In 1987, I was privileged to be asked to join as a charter member of the Rotary Club of Altona City, which I am still a member today. The one thing I miss about my home country is my relatives.

Antonio Perillo

Arrived 1963

I arrived in Australia from Circello Benevento, Italy on 31st July 1963 on a ship called *Flotta Lauro Lines – Roma*. The first port that I arrived in was Fremantle. I saw the price of a 1961 Holden which was 1200 Lira (Italian currency) – and that would have been equivalent to a day's work. When I arrived in North Melbourne, I stayed with my brother.

The very first thing that I noticed was the amount of empty beer bottles stacked along the back fence, which I later used to store my home made tomato sauce! Coming from Switzerland where you bring three empties and you purchase a full bottle for free, I thought that was very strange. I enjoyed the freedom that I found in Australia, you could look for work anywhere and no one would ask for your identity or passport. The only question was if you were willing to work. I never imagined staying permanently in Australia; I only came to visit my brother.

Some of the challenges that I faced were the language barrier, not having enough education to do what I wanted, (electronics) and not being able to enrol here because my basic education was not enough.

I got involved in Australian culture by working and dealing with the public. Firstly as a barman, then as an insurance representative, where I worked for decades.

I also worked in the food industry and now I work as a handyman – which is what I love to do the best. The things that I miss about my home country are my family, friends and the atmosphere of the country town life, where everyone knows each other.

Mary Perillo

Arrived 1958

I arrived in Australia by ship in October 1958 with my mother and two sisters. My first impressions were that I

loved the lino in my bedroom! It had a pattern of flowers. I tasted cornflakes with milk for the first time and it has been on my breakfast menu ever since. I couldn't understand a word of English, it was hard at first. I remember wondering what the mussels were that were stuck along the post at the pier in Williamstown.

When I arrived in Australia, I didn't have any set expectations, I just wanted to be with my dad who had been in Australia, alone for three years. Main challenge that I faced was the language. At school, I had no idea what the other children or the teacher were saying. I received no special treatment from the nuns at Sacred Heart Newport. They would make me stand up and read in front of the class and I remember one time that everyone laughed. I even got the cane when I got my spelling wrong.

The one thing that I knew was that I had to learn the English language and fast! To become involved in Australian society, I made friends with non-Italian speaking people, tried different foods, learned English and tried to look at things from a different perspective.

The things that I miss about my home country are; my school friends and family. I also miss the very close relationship that is shared in village life, hearing my mother language being spoken by everyone in the street, especially the dialect and also the summer parties.

Rosa Simon

Arrived 1965

I was born in Vibo Valentia, Calabria, Italia. I was born in a school that was a castle. My mum and dad met there because my dad was working there as a gardener.

I grew up there and went to school and after that I went to learn embroidery where the nuns lived. I finished school in 1958. My dad came to Australia in 1961 to visit his brother but decided to stay because there were many opportunities.

I came to Australia first in 1965 and then my mother came in 1966. My brother came later when he finished his studies. I worked as a dressmaker for two years. Then I got married in 1968 and I had four children and I worked from home as a dressmaker. Now I am going to school again to learn English and I enjoy coming to computer class.



Emmanuella Siragusa

Arrived 1962

I arrived in Australia on 11th November 1962. I came with my husband Antonio and my son Mario Antonio, who was two years and five months old at the time. The ship that we travelled on was called *Neptunia*. It was the last trip that it

was doing to Australia. We were at sea for twenty-seven days and it seemed that we were never going to arrive. When we did arrive, my first impression of Australia was that the houses were all so close and low, they were all built of wood and inside there were long corridors that reminded me of train wagons.

The culture in Australia was all different to ours. No one would say hello to us when we would walk by and I missed this because in my home town everyone would say 'buongiorno.' In the beginning it was very hard because I did not know how to speak English and could not understand one word.

I was very sad to leave my parents, brothers and sisters who did not want to migrate to Australia. We were a big family of seven and I started my new life in Australia and I missed them very much. My life in Australia went on, working to acquire all that we needed. With the help of God giving us good health we have been blessed with good times and have been able to deal with the bad times.

Now I am at the third stage of my life hoping God will give me the joy of being able to enjoy my two children and grandchildren. I am very happy with the way that my life has turned out in Australia.

Gina Skrezenek

Arrived 1953

I came from Italy, a city by the name of Verona. Verona is known as the most romantic and musical city in the world. This is the city that I only have to think about and my heart starts to beat quickly.

I travelled by ship named *Neptunia*. I arrived in Melbourne in November 1953. I came to Australia by myself since my husband was already in Australia; he had arrived a few months earlier. After a few days I started my first Australian job which was quite an experience since I didn't know a single word of English.

One of my first memories of Australia was that everything seemed to be very huge, such as streets and all the buildings. Another thing that I remember was that for a few months I was daydreaming a lot.



I had no expectations for my life in Australia, at the time my dream was to go back to Italy as soon as possible. I came to Australia not out of necessity but as an adventure since in Italy I had everything I needed including a good family and also a good job. At the time I thought that all this would last only few months.

As you can see many years later I am still here and my adventure is still going. Maybe not as happily as I would like it to be, but with my wonderful and devoted daughter's help, I am sure that I will get there.

Giuliana Vesconi

Arrived 1966

I am a student from Williamstown Community Centre. I came to Australia in 1966. I was already married and I had a son named Massimo.

For me it was a very hard life to leave my family in Italy, but my husband found a job and then I found living in Australia better.

My dream was still to go back to Italy. In 1978 my second son was born and he brought lots of joy and I was happy. In 2006 my husband died and there was a lot of sadness in me but my faith and lots of praying helped me.



Japan



Mari Heazlewood

Arrived 1971

I came to Melbourne from Tokyo Japan. It was the middle of September 1971. I was twenty-two years old and had just graduated University.

I came here alone. I had a qualification to be a geography teacher in Japan. I wanted to travel to several countries before taking up the position. My father had a friend in Melbourne University. Mr. L.R. Oates. I needed to have a guardian to obtain the entry visa, and Mr. Oates was my primary contact. I did not know any other people.

I arrived to Melbourne port on *MV New Holland* – half cargo, half passenger ship from Japan. The voyage took nearly one month, calling into various ports of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Brisbane, Sydney, Geelong and Melbourne. My English was limited, but the voyage was like an English school. A Chinese nurse on board was looking after children on board and she was very kind to me. When the ship arrived in Hong Kong, she took me to see her family. During the one month voyage, I improved my conversational English.

In the Japanese text book, I learned Australia has a White Australian Policy and Asian people are not welcomed. My first impressions of Australia was 'blue skies' and the houses had red, green and colourful roofs. Old fashioned Japanese houses had only black roof tiles.

Despite the 'White Australia Policy,' I never encountered any discrimination. When I moved in a home stay family, the mother Mrs Dunn taught me how to make beds and how to prepare meals. Everything was new to me and full of surprises.

There were hardly any Japanese people around and I had to communicate with English from day one of arrival.

I had little conversational English, so I attended English schools for migrants. Mr Walker said, "If you want to get a job, you need to speak well." All classmates were migrants, so everyone studied hard.

My guardian Mr Oates' wife was a war bride from Japan and she found me a job at "Shoppers Paradise" ground floor at Southern Cross Hotel. A few days after my arrival, I was selling black opals and koala bears to Japanese business people. Not many tourists were visiting Australia in 1971.



I was planning to return to Japan when I used up all my money. The Australian dollar was equal to 480 yen. I never thought I'd settle in forever at that time. I loved learning the new language and meeting new people.

I was picking up English quickly. I found my next job at Noritake China wear showroom. I took telephone orders with a code number. I often made mistakes with the numbers 13 and 30. Sometimes I mistook store name, people's name and delivery address. It was challenging but I think it helped improve my English.

I did not experience any hostility but one day at the station, one elderly Australian lady nearly hit me with an umbrella, and she was accusing me, "My husband and my boys were killed by your people!" This was the first encounter realising WWII was a Pacific War, not just a US and Japanese War. I have studied about Japanese War Bride history settling down in Australia soon after WWII.

When people invited me to join them, I always joined. I also got involved in various Japanese community activities. I did not have immediate family here and wanted to be a part of society and community. I also found people helped me and took me in as a part of group or individually.



When I turned 50 years old, I thought now it is my turn to help the Australian society and community. I am assisting newly arrived Japanese people to settle in this country.

Japan has changed very much from 1971. Current Japanese life style is too fast, too busy and too competitive. I miss old fashioned and traditional Japan which was caring and considerate. After 3.11 East Japan Quake and Tsunami, Japanese people showed their solidarity and resilience.

This is one of the reasons, I am now involved in re-creating old “Japan” in Melbourne for Japanese bi-lingual elderly care services. We provide and build elderly care facilities, Japanese food, music, dance and Onsen (hot springs) and gardens for the group.

When I was applying for jobs at Education Departments and Foreign Ministry positions, one of the requirements was to be Australian citizen. I was naturalised on 13th December 1974.

Latvia



Ilga Willis

Arrived 2007

I was born in Riga
which is the capital of
Latvia. I came to



Australia five years ago. I got married to an Australian and my dreams came true. Nobody came with me.

My flight was from Riga to London and London to Melbourne. It was a long way. I was tired and also happy. My husband with flowers in his hands and my mother in law were waiting for me at the airport.

I lived in a typical Australian family with English background. I did and still learn English - the Aussie life, it's very interesting. I respect and enjoy it. I have lots of Aussie friends now and I learn from them about life here too.

I enjoy going to English classes at Williamstown Community Centre. I have a beautiful teacher and classmates which I am grateful for. I have a positive attitude to life and it helps me. I love Australian beautiful birds, koalas, kangaroos, different bushes and big mountains.

I love what I have, what I am and what I am doing. I am happy and learn from my problems and deal with them. It teaches me. My children are married and live their own lives in Latvia but we miss each other too and then we speak on Skype. I love travelling there.

Lebanon



Samira Abdo

Arrived 1978

My name is Samira. I was born in Lebanon in 1962. My parents and my family are all from Lebanon. My dad worked full time on the farm and my mum was a house wife. I have three sisters and three brothers.

I was a good student and I wanted to go to college to study media but the war in my country made it very hard for my dream to come true. My life turned in a very different direction at this time. I met someone who I fell in love with and three months later he migrated to Australia. One year later I followed him to Melbourne, Australia.

I was very happy to see a beautiful country like Australia and meet the beautiful people here. Then we got married and had our family but I was always nostalgic for my olden days with my friends and my family. I just miss sitting and eating and talking with them.

Mariam Al Kuntar

Arrived 2011

In 2008 I got engaged to a lovely man, who came to Australia as a student. He brought me here as his wife after our marriage in Lebanon.

I moved to Australia in 2010 as a tourist, then I went back home after about one year. In 2011, I migrated to Australia.

I travelled by myself and the journey was really arduous because I felt very sick on the plane.

After that difficult day I had a nice feeling when I got off from the plane and saw the new country "Australia". The people were very polite at the airport and the weather was cool. When I saw the roads and the buildings I realised the modern country that I was in.

The first dream that I had for my life in Australia was to live with my husband in the country that he wanted to start his future in, so did I. I had another new dream for my life here when I started to explore this beautiful country. The first thing was to speak English, then to study at university and to have a great job later.

It wasn't so easy to achieve those dreams. I had a big challenge with the language at first because studying and speaking English needs a lot of practice and time as well, so studying a new language is not that easy. It took more than one year. I also had a problem learning how to use public transport but now I feel better and more comfortable because I have learned all those difficult things even though I still need more English practice.

It wasn't a problem for me to get involved in the Australian society because I knew a lot of Lebanese people here and I had met a lot of people while I was studying English.

Even though I have a great life in Australia I always feel homesick when I think about my country. I also feel nostalgic about my family and the one thing that I always miss is the sitting around with my whole family to have a dinner together. That really makes me nostalgic about my old great days.

Rawia Matar

Arrived 2009

I came from Lebanon and I arrived in Australia on 26th September 2009.

Nobody from my family came with me but I travelled with my friend who I met in Beirut airport. I came by plane and I had two stop-overs. The first stop-over was in Dubai and the second one was in Malaysia, then I arrived at Melbourne airport.



My first impressions were very difficult because I left my family, my friends, and I started a new life. I was missing my family, I had no friends here.

I found everything in Melbourne strange and different to my country. I liked how close the houses were together and how convenient all facilities were. Slowly I got used to life in Australia.

Before I came to Australia I dreamed of getting a new house with my husband and finding a job as well. I enjoy going to English classes at Williamstown Community Centre to learn English and make friends and to understand

Australian people as well. I saw a kangaroo for the first time in my life, I liked it. Australia is a beautiful country.

Souhaila Taleb

Arrived 2008

This is a photo of Mish Mish (my village in Lebanon) in winter. I came from Lebanon and I first arrived in Australia in 2008. I came by myself. I met my husband in my country and we married. After that he came here by himself and I got my visa to join him.



The journey to Australia was very hard because it was the first time I had been on an aeroplane. I was dizzy, nervous and upset because I'd left my family. When I arrived in Australia I found all my cousins and my husband waiting for me. I was happy and I liked Melbourne because everything was clean and people were friendly.

My dreams were to be happy with my husband and to live together forever, go to school to learn the language and do more study and after that to find a good job and make money.

The language was very difficult for me and I had to get to know everyone. I met new people and went to community events and went shopping together with my cousins. I miss my parents, to sit with them and spend time as a family. I miss my bed, my school, my friends and my cousins. I miss everything about my country.

Macedonia



Todorka Temelkouska

Arrived 1980

My name is Todorka, I was born in Macedonia. My family

was small but very close to each other. After I finished high school I became a chemical technician and started working in a laboratory for four years.

In 1976 I married, had a child and my family decided to go for a better life in Australia in 1980. That was a big change for us but my family and my culture, I will never forget. We keep going to traditional dancing and other activities.

Last year I went back to my country to see my family, but that was a very sad meeting. My sister passed away and nine days later my mum. I went to my house and found many things which reminded me of my past life in Macedonia, especially my mum. She was a hard worker and she handmade many traditional cloths.

When I saw all those important things I took them with me and brought them to Australia. When everything is ready, I'm going to put them in a frame and look at them every day to help me remember them all the time.



Malta



Carmello Briffa

Arrived 1960

I arrived in Australia on ANZAC day, 25th April 1960 from Malta, at the age of 26. The trip took four days by KLM airlines. I spent one day in Darwin and I remember some people being scared of the crocodiles. I arrived at Essendon airport.

I came to Australia by myself and after six months my wife came over with my four children aged seven (twins), six and four. After about eleven years, we had another child born in Australia, whom I call my “kangaroo.”

When I arrived, I lived with my uncle, when my family came over, we lived in a bungalow with my cousin in Altona. In Malta, I was in the British Army and my role was that of a Radar Operator. I wanted to come to Australia when I was just seventeen, but my family would not agree. In Malta, it was hard to find a job, so that's why I joined the British Army.



I remember a time when I was travelling to work in Australia, I was working at the Cotton Bradford Mills in Footscray and I got lost.

There was no one around to help me, until someone did help me and I was a long way from the Mills. I finally got to work, but it took a long time that day.

My dream of working for the RAAF in Laverton did not come to pass, as I was involved in a major machinery

accident when I was working at RHEEMS on Geelong Road. The accident took away most of my hand and I was out of work for three years. It occurred a year later after I arrived on the 26th April 1961. I will never forget that day.

This was a major challenge for me, as I still had a very young family to support and my wife had very little English. I was determined to keep positive and strong and when I got better, I continued in the workforce for eighteen years. The best time I remember was when I was working as a cook's assistant in Laverton.

I felt a little isolated in Australia, as it was very different to my life in Malta, but I worked hard to support my family. The things I miss the most about my home country are the special religious celebrations and my relatives, but I do not regret coming to this beautiful country.



Myanmar (Burma)





Karen group at Laverton



Neng Boi

Arrived 2008

I am from Burma (Myanmar), but I came to Australia from India. Due to a political crisis in Burma I went to New Delhi, India to get help from the UNHCR (United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees). I lived in India for six years and then I came to Australia as a Humanitarian Refugee in 2008.

I came by myself. It was a very long journey for me to travel to Australia. From my home country I went by foot to get across the border of Indo-Burma, and I took buses and trains to get to New Delhi. Then I was registered as a refugee under the UNHCR and spent six years in India. I thought I would have to spend the rest of my life in India where I was not safe and struggling for daily life. I thank God and the government of Australia for getting me out of the hardest life in India. After six years I got a humanitarian refugee visa for Australia.

My first impressions of Australia were the beaches. I had never seen the beach before in my life. In my country I would have to spend a lot of money to see the beach but here I live nearby the beach. People are very kind and gentle. When I see people saying thank you to the bus driver, I really love it because it is very different from my own experiences.

I have a dream of getting a good job, to support myself and my family. The challenges I had in the beginning was the language. Even though I have learned English in my country, I didn't practice speaking it. I learned to understand the Australian culture through friends and workmates.

I miss my family. I miss my parents, brothers, sisters and friends. I miss most my family meal times. All family members would have to sit at the dining table, and I used to sit next to my father. I very much enjoyed the meal time even though we didn't have many dishes on the table. I also miss the stream that flows at the backyard of our farm. I used to swim and play with my parents and sisters in the stream after we finished work on the farm.

Emily

Arrived 2009

I came to Australia three years ago. Before I came to Australia I lived in Umpiem Refugee Camp. I had my family, with my mother and three sisters and four daughters. On 1st May 2001, I got married. I was a nursery teacher for nine years. Then I was a Sunday school teacher. My family didn't have a free life so I applied to come to Australia.

I thank God I came to Australia and now I live in this country and I'm very happy. My problem is I can't speak English very well and I am very shy. I hope my life in Australia will always be happy.

When I was five years old I used to play with my friends. I felt very happy. We played many games. I started school when I was six years old. I learned English, Burmese and Math. I was happy to go to school but I was a slow learner so I had to do each grade for two years from grade one to grade five.

In 1998 I was unfortunate; I had to leave my school because my grandparents and my father died. My mother had a new husband and so I had a difficult life. I also had to look after my sister and brother. My whole family had a difficult life.

At that time we had to give 60per cent of what we got from our paddy farm to the Burmese government so our life was very tough.

Ma Ma Aye Hsar

Arrived 2009

My name is Ma Ma Aye. I was born in Mae Pa Lea village, Karen State, Burma on 8th October 1987. I am the youngest sister in my family. I arrived at Hway Kah Loke Camp on 1st June 1991, when I was only three years old.

My parents were farmers. While we were living in Burma, the military troops would often come and ask for porters and my father had to go as a porter to the front line. We also had to pay fees and if we could not pay them we were treated badly. Villagers had to go as porters in turn with payment. We were under their watch. If we were suspected of having contact with the insurgent army they tortured us.

One day they suspected our village of having contact with the insurgents so they came and tortured our villagers, then they burnt down our village. So we had to flee and stay at Hway Kah Loke refugee camp in Thailand.

I started going to school when I was six years old in 1993. In 1998 DKBA and the Burmese military troops attacked and burnt our camp so we had to flee and stay at another camp named Umpiem Refugee Camp. I passed my examination in March 2007.

I got married on 19th April 2007. At that time I was four months pregnant. My husband applied to go to three countries and was permitted to settle in Australia.

I was separated from my husband. I was lonely and very sad, but my parents supported me so I would not feel so lonely any more.

After a while my husband put in an application form for me. We arrived in Melbourne in 2009. My husband met us at the airport and drove us to our home in Laverton.

We have another daughter Hsar Ku Moo now. We are happy here but I miss my family very much and wish they could come to Australia too.

Mu K'POR

Arrived 2009

My name is Mu K'Por and I come from Burma. I married in 1991 and I have six children – two girls and four boys. My youngest son was born in Australia in 2010. His name is Nelson and he goes to English class with me. He loves to play with the other children while I am studying English.

When I was a child, I couldn't go to school because my family was poor. There were 11 people in my family. I am the second daughter in the family and so I had to look after my brothers and sisters. At Sunday school, I learned to read stories and simple words.

On the 5th March 2009 I came to Australia and I now go to English class at AMES in Laverton every week. I am learning to read and write. I am happy to study and to live in Australia.

Hsa Ku

Arrived 2010

When I lived in Burma I stayed with my parents. My parents were farmers. When I was living with my parents I was single. I had two sisters and a brother.

In 1995 I left my country because my village was destroyed. Then in 1996 my father died. After that, I went to a Thai refugee camp.

I stayed in the camp for two years and I was married in 1998. In 2000 I gave birth to my first son and in 2002 to my second son. In 2004 I gave birth to my third child, a daughter. And then in 2008 I fell pregnant again and on the 30th October, I gave birth to my youngest son.

I had an opportunity to come to Australia and so on 20th January 2010. I arrived in Melbourne, Australia. I am very happy and safe living in Australia even though I am far from Burma and Thailand.

El Lay

Arrived 2008

I remember celebrating the Karen New Year in my Thai Refugee Camp five years ago in 2007. I was so happy to celebrate the event with my family, community and our national group. We heard Karen songs, saw Karen dances and listened to Karen history.

It was wonderful to see my national people performing in front of the community. I was also glad that my family and friends were there to watch it with me. At 12.00 midnight everybody waited for the countdown to hit midnight. Then everybody clapped and cheered. We had a wonderful celebration and I will never forget it.

Say Ray Paw Lweh

Arrived 2009

My name is Say Ray Paw. I am 33 years old. I was born on the Thai and Burmese border line so I have lived my whole life in a Refugee Camp. For 24 years I lived with my parents. I have one brother and two sisters. In 2002, my mother died and in 2008 I got married and had two kids.

Life in the refugee camp was very difficult. I couldn't go outside the camp to look for work to support my family. A humanitarian group called BBC gave us rice, chillies, yellow beans, cooking oil, fish paste and charcoal every month. I had a little stove to cook on.

Every family got the same food. I grew vegetables for my family in my little garden behind my house. I grew lettuce, coriander and kankong. We got water from a lake. I also looked for bamboo shoots in the jungle.

During the monsoon we had lots of rain and it got very slippery. This was a dangerous time. Many people broke their legs. A medical team looked after the refugees.

I arrived in Australia on the 5th August 2009 and in Australia I had one more child. They are all boys. I study English language because it is important for me to get a good job for the future. My family loves Australia.

Benjamin Tin Mayit

Arrived 2011

I am originally from Kachin state which is the northern part of Burma (Myanmar). I first arrived in Australia on 21 July 2011. I came with my family which consists of me, my wife and three children.

I would like to separate my entire journey into two parts; from my village in Burma to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and then Kuala Lumpur to Australia.

It took me more than a month to reach Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from my village. It was a treacherous journey where we used numerous means of travelling to avoid the relevant authority checkpoints. We had to go through Thailand with the help of a number of local people smugglers. We had to hide in the jungle for days and nights at times. To cut the story short, I eventually reached Kuala Lumpur where the UNHCR office is located after more than a month long journey. I waited in Malaysia for almost seven years while my claim for refugee status was being processed by UNHCR and resettlement by the Australian Government.

We could sense a great deal of peace and security as soon as we arrived. The hospitality and warm welcome from the social workers made us to feel at home. We were confronted with the winter cold weather and it provoked memories of my home village which is surrounded by ice-picked mountains all year round.

The greatest dream I have is to bring up my children to be educated so that they will contribute positively to the Australian community and if possible to the communities back in my original country.

The well designed and effective system of the Australian government eliminates many of the problems and challenges which would otherwise be very tough and stressful when migrating to a new country. For instance, the challenge that arose from my language barrier was significantly slashed with government funded interpreting and translating services. However being able to integrate with and to become assimilated into the long existed Australian community still remains quite challenging.

There have not been many ways that I have been able to get involved in the Australian Society directly so far. Most of my daily activities are mainly associated with my family and our Kachin community such as; attending my language school, driving my kids to school and picking them up afterward, attending church every Sunday and participating in a range of other community activities.

The thing that I miss the most about my home country is the exquisite nature scenery of my home land, my friends and relatives left behind and the traditional events we use to hold often keep popping up in my memory every now and then.



Mu K’Paw Aung Min

Arrived 2007

My name is Mu K’Paw. I am 47 years old. I was born in Burma on 13th November 1965. I lived in a village with my parents and there were six brothers and one sister.

My parents were farmers. We were a poor family and my siblings couldn’t go to school. Only I went to school. I was the only one to get a sponsor from Canada so I could go to school and study in the city called Pah Ah in Karen state. My village was 30km away from the city. When school started we had to go to school in the city and then when school finished we would come back to the village. And so in 1972 I started school. I went to school till Year 10.

In 1984 school finished. I looked for a job. I had no job. In 1989 I married. In 1990 I had my eldest son. In 2006 I had my smallest son. Now I have six children. In 1994 I arrived in a Thai refugee camp. I lived in the refugee camp for 12 long years. In the refugee camp I got a job teaching. I got 500 Thai baht per month. It was not enough for the family. I lived in the refugee camp on the Thai-Burmese border for a long time but I didn’t have any opportunities there either.

In 2005 I applied to come to Australia and I waited for two years. In 2007 I got a visa from the Australian Immigration Department and we were very happy. On 2nd July 2007 my family left the refugee camp and we got a lift by car to Mae Sot and we stayed in Mae Sot for two days and then we caught a bus from Mae Sot to Bangkok airport and from there we flew to Australia.

We arrived on the 5th July 2007 at Sydney Airport early in the morning. Next we flew to Melbourne Airport and drove to St. Albans. We were very happy to arrive in Australia. Now I live in Laverton, a suburb of Melbourne, and still go

to school. I have a good life here. I hope in the future everything will be better. I'm happy in Australia.

May God bless all Australian people.

Taw Doh Moo

Arrived 2007

I was born in Burma and I grew up in a very small village. I did not dare to live in my village due to the consequence of civil war and I went to a refugee camp in Thailand. I lived in a refugee camp for ten years and I had an opportunity to come to Australia in 2007. I came to Australia with my wife and three sons.

I applied for resettlement to come to Australia and I needed to wait for one year due to the interview and medical check processes. I came to Australia by aeroplane. The buildings, roads and trains were very impressive to me when I first arrived in Australia. I was also surprised about the weather when I first arrived in Australia.

My dream is to work with disadvantaged people who need assistance. Language is the most challenging issue for me. I went to English classes when I arrived in Australia. Then I studied a TAFE course. I am now studying an under graduate course at a university. I am also doing some voluntary and paid work in the community.



Lor Na

Arrived 2005

My name is Lor Na. I was born in a small village. There are mountains, hills, valleys and a small stream near my village. There are wild animals in the forest and lots of different types of fish in the small stream. To me, it's a beautiful village. I wish I could live in my village forever but I had to leave my village because of the oppression of the military Government. I left my village in 1992. Between 1992 and 1996, I lived in the jungle. In 1997 we arrived in the Refugee Camp. We were recognised as refugees by U.N.H.C.R.

I was married in 1997. I miscarried in 1998. I gave birth to my eldest son in 2000. My younger son was born in 2006. We arrived in Melbourne on the 11th of November 2005. Currently my father lives with my family. I have to take care of my elderly father.

When I lived in Burma my parents were farmers. They planted crops, vegetables and they had animals on the farm. My parents raised us while doing farm work every day. They didn't have an everyday income, they just worked from day to day to survive. We had a poor but a happy life.

The Burmese Government forced us to pay taxes more than we earned and more than we had. We had to face an insecure life from the Burmese army.

Whenever we heard the dogs barking we had to flee and hide in the bushes or run outside the village and hide in the cave.

When they saw the villagers they beat and tortured them and even killed them. When they came into a village and

didn't see any people they killed the animals such as pigs, chickens, took the good things that they wanted and then burnt down the houses. Sometimes when we came back, we would see the ashes on the ground and that all our belongings were gone. Some villagers had enough money to build their house from wood and when they did, the Burmese soldiers would come and burn the house down. So the villagers built their houses from bamboo and leaves for the roof.

We had to suffer much oppression from the Burmese army. The soldiers always asked us to be their porters but if during portering the villagers became sick, weak or injured, they kicked them down into the valley, cliffs or they would kill them. They forced the Karen villagers to relocate their village around their army compound to protect them from Karen soldiers. All Karen people in Burma had the same suffering from the Burmese army.

In order to survive, we had to work very hard. Sometimes we didn't have food to eat and we could always hear children crying for food. So in 1992 we abandoned our village and moved to the jungle. The Burmese army searched for us while we were hiding. We travelled every day the best way we could until we reached the Thai-Burmese border.

We walked for three months and then we reached the Thai-Burmese border. We couldn't walk fast because we had old people 80 to 90 years old, children, blind people and we also had heavy rains, so it took longer to travel.

When we reached Thailand we lived there for one month and the Thai soldiers came and told us to go back to Burma.

They wouldn't give us permission to stay in their country. We moved again to another place for five months and again the Thai authorities came and told us to leave. From 1992 to 1997, we had to move around and there was no place to call home and no security for us. During that time many people died because there was no medication, especially for the women. They could not deliver their babies as there was no midwife so the mothers and unborn children died.

There was no school, hospital, medicines or enough food and clothing. During that time we lived in a small little hut made of bamboo and banana leaves for the roof. We had to keep the fire on at night time because we didn't have mosquito nets. We didn't live there for a long period because it was very close to the border so the Burmese army came and opened fire near us so we had to move to another place.

In June 1997 we all had the opportunity to go and stay in Thailand by the arrangement of the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Thai Government. The Burmese army killed all the Karen people so from 1997 onwards, we settled in the Refugee Camp in Thailand. We received rations and support from overseas organisations.

My ration was 1kg of yellow beans, cooking oil, 1kg salt, fish paste, charcoal and some other things for my needs for one month. We all become real refugees.

When we lived in the camp we were not allowed to go out from the camp. If the Thai authorities found out they would arrest us and put us in jail.

Everyone had permission to have a three square metre block of land to build their house - no more than that

regardless whether the family was big or small. We used a plastic sheet for the roof and each family was allowed to have one plastic sheet. The distance from each house had to be one metre. There were teachers, nurses and schools in the camp. Some people sold homemade snacks around the camp.

If some girls and women were looking for vegetables on the river bank, Thai soldiers would rape them and then send them back to the camp. Life in the camp was not easy and there was no security. I couldn't afford to buy food and had no money. There was no improvement for Karen people. Every day and night was always filled with fear and worries.

Then I got the opportunity to come to Australia. On 11th November 2005, I arrived in Melbourne, Australia. I am very happy and safe to live in Australia even though I am far from Burma and Thailand.

Moo Ko Paw (Moo Ka)

Arrived 2010

Before I came to Australia I lived in a refugee camp called Ma Ra Moe. I lived there for nearly eight years. My life in

the refugee camp was quite hard because I didn't have money to support my family. My husband and I didn't have a chance to find a job because we were not allowed out of the camp so we couldn't get a job in a Thai village.

My brother came to Australia earlier and he filled in a form for family reunion in 2009. My whole family arrived here in January 2010.

In the refugee camp I went to Number 1 High School. I learned Maths, English, Karen, Burmese, Geography and History.

In Year 10, I married my husband, Po Gay. Many students get married when they are still at school. In Year 10, I was 19 years old. When I married, I left school because that was the rule at school. I had my first child in the refugee camp and then we had another child in Australia.

I feel homesick for my country. I still have a brother in the refugee camp but I am happy that I am free and my children can get a good education here. I would like to be a child care worker.

Tha May Paw

Arrived 2008

My name is Tha May Paw. I am 24 years old. I was born in Burma. In 1992 my family had to flee and in 1997 we

arrived in a refugee camp. In 2006 I got married. I had one son and in 2008 on March 18th my family came to Australia. I have three sisters and three brothers. Unfortunately two of my sisters died. My mother and father were very heartbroken. Now my brother and sister and I live in Australia. We are a big family and we are very, very happy. I am very lucky.

All of the houses in the refugee camp were made of bamboo. My house was also built from bamboo and the roof was made of leaves. Normally people helped each other to build their homes. In the refugee camp everyone helped each other and we felt like a family.

We ate rice, vegetables and soup or Karen porridge nearly every day but sometimes we had eggs, fish and meat. We could get those from the Thai shops. We got rice, salt, chilli, fish paste and cooking oil from the BBC. My husband made brooms and sold them together with bamboo and so we got a bit of money to buy extra food that we wanted and needed.

Ta Eh Soe

Arrived 2007

I came to Australia five years ago. Before I came to Australia I lived in Mae La refugee camp for 22 years. I lived together with my parents and my sisters. On the 28th

March 2002 I got married. After I married I lived in a separate house and we had two children.

When I lived in my country I didn't have any opportunities, security or protection. The Burmese soldiers came to our village and they burned our village and they killed the people so we could no longer live in our country and we had to move to the Thai-Burmese border. I lived in the refugee camp for a long time but I didn't have any opportunities there either. My life in the refugee camp was very difficult and we didn't have a free life so I decided myself to come to Australia.

In 2005 we applied to come to Australia and we waited for two years. It was a long way to Australia. First we caught a car to Mae Sot and we stayed in Mae Sot for two days and we had medical checks. We passed the check-ups. If we didn't pass we couldn't come to Australia.

After that we caught a bus from Mae Sot to Bangkok airport and from there we flew to Australia. It was a long way to Australia and during the whole trip I didn't eat anything because I was sick.

We arrived at Melbourne airport early in the morning. My brother-in-law was waiting for us. He drove us to his house. We were very happy to arrive in Australia. We had travelled for four days to come to Australia. It was a very, very long journey but I'm glad we came.

Sheenary Win

Arrived 2007

My name is Sheenary Win. I was born in Burma in 1974 in a small village. When I was six years old I started school in

my village but when I was seven years old I went to another school in the city. I stayed with my grandmother.

In 1988, when I was in grade six I had to leave my school because there was a big political problem in the whole country of Burma. All schools had to stop. I came back to my village and stayed with my family and helped my parents.

In 1991 I left my country and went to Thailand to find a job. I stayed there for one year. After that I moved to another place on the Burmese border and stayed there for four years and helped the poor people there. After that the Burmese soldiers and the Karen soldiers began fighting and so we had to move to Thailand and stay in a refugee camp. We all had a difficult life. I stayed there for 10 years.

After that in 2007, I had an opportunity to re-settle in Australia. Now I have a good life here. May God bless all Australian people.

When I was in Burma in 1991 and I was still a teenager, my family had to leave Burma because we had a difficult life there. I had to stay at a place for four years where the Karen people were holding a revolution.

In 1997 the Burmese soldiers came to the Karen place and began fighting the Karen soldiers so all the Karen people had to move. Some people went to Thailand by car and some people went on foot. I had to walk with many people for 10 days to Thailand. Some people got sick along the way and some children died. One of the women, who was heavily pregnant, delivered her baby during the night and

then had to get up and continue to walk. Finally we arrived at the Thailand refugee camp. When we first arrived in the camp, our life was really difficult. We had to sleep on the bare ground and sit and eat on the leaves.

In 2007 I arrived in Australia. When I was in Burma I never thought I would go to Australia but God was amazing and provided things for us. He also allowed the Australian government to show compassion to us and admit us to this country. And so we arrived in Australia.

When I arrived in Australia, I was happy and surprised because when I looked around everything was wonderful. Sometimes I got lost, and I worried about my future and I missed my family.

Now I'm happy because my family are all here. I really thank God and Australia for helping us and permitting us to live in Australia. I will be a good person and have responsibility here. May God bless all Australian people.

When I was a little girl I never thought I would live in Australia. I thought that Australia was like heaven. When I heard that some Karen went to Australia I wanted to come too. In 2007 I was lucky enough to go to Australia.

At first when I arrived in Australia, I felt very cold and I missed my family. When I looked at my niece's photo I cried. My husband and I usually felt lost, because when I looked around all the buildings looked similar. After two months I received a letter to go to Footscray. When a teacher gave me a test I couldn't answer my teacher. I was

really disappointed and upset but I really tried to improve my English. Now I think my English is a little bit better.

Now I live in Laverton, a suburb in Melbourne, and still go to school. I have a good life here. I think in the future everything will be better and better. I'm happy in Australia.

I will never forget Christmas day in 1990 when I was still living in my village. Many people came and we had many activities. Our leaders invited people from many villages. That Christmas day was on a Saturday. We had competitions and groups of young people were singing. In the morning at about 8 o'clock we watched soccer and at about 12 o'clock we had lunch. In the afternoon, we had a lot of fun games and we watched soccer and volleyball and we talked, walked and bought some things.

In the evening at about 8 o'clock we had a concert. First we had a church service after that, in the program, we had many people from other villages singing. My village told funny stories and jokes and did some beautiful dancing. We finished at about midnight. I felt really happy.

I'll never forget that Christmas that we had. I hope my villagers will always have wonderful Christmases just like that one.

Philippines



Mylene Camu Caguimbal

Arrived 2007

I was born the in Philippines and grew up in Manila Quezon City. I had so many working experiences in my country but

at the age of 19 years I decided to work on a passenger ship. That's where I met my husband and now we live together here in this lovely country of Australia.

The most important thing that I want to share is the image of the Virgin Mary. I was a high school student when I received this image. After I got this image, I became a more religious person. I am the most religious person in my family. Honestly after I became a religious person I have had a lot of blessings up until now. I'm very thankful to our Almighty One for continuing to give me many blessings.



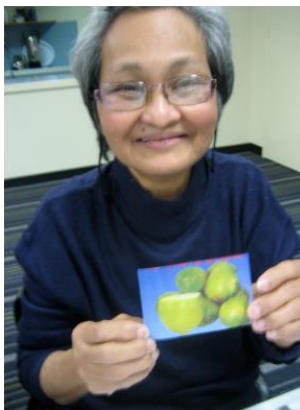
Helen Villianueva

Arrived 1987

I was born in a town hospital in the Philippines and grew up in a city next to Manila.

By the early morning of the 18th of November, 1987 (through a plane window) I saw a new landscape lit by the sunrise. We were flying over a part of a new land, Australia. We were soon to land where my husband and I expected to live the rest of our lives and my kids to start their new young lives.

My first plane ride was my trip to Australia, with my husband and children then aged 10, five and four years old. We almost did not make the flight from Manila due to some odd problems, thirty minutes before the first flight. Thanks to some efficient people, we were approved before we took off from Melbourne International Airport and things went fine. Later, we were met by my siblings, and we started the Australian life in my brother's home.



At first I felt like an alien in the new land. The wide open spaces that nature has provided and the big old trees, farms in sight, the seaside and wild plants made me feel good and at home. Trips to the suburbs and the Melbourne CBD made me feel lost.

Coming to Australia I brought with me a few dreams. I wished for a better challenging job that has with it a fairly non political approach. I also looked forward to a better life in a new house and new friends. I also hoped for a good future for each of my family members, in life, health and education. A few challenges met me as life restarted from nothing.

In the years in this land, I have met Australians from many places: I had a multicultural workplace, learning about how everyone survives from day to day and tips on how to go on. There were also fellow Filipinos I met and that guided me along as we shared stories about life.

In all the years here, I missed a lot of my life in the Philippines. I often wonder about my long term friends and acquaintances I left back home. I long for the clan's annual reunion with relatives from all over the world. At times I think about the culture, food and practises that I enjoyed back home. Nature, quiet, warm and beautiful sunrise or sunset creates nostalgia for the same times in my country where beautiful tropical scenes, beaches, picnics and outings all haunt me in summer.

South America



Jackie Faez

Arrived 1990

I come from Santiago, South America. We arrived in Sydney, Australia in October 1990, my family (my husband and son). We flew from Santiago to Easter Island, we went around the Island and then to Tahiti and we stayed one night in a beautiful hotel, it was so hot that we had to spend all night in the swimming pool.

From there we went to New Zealand where we spent another night in a nice hotel. We met a few people from Peru, Argentina; it was so good to find some people that spoke the same language. We arrived in Sydney where my sister's family were waiting for us.

My first impression was that it was a lonely country, no people on the street. For my son it was very sad because there were no children in the street for him to play with. After a few weeks my son started classes in the School of Languages where he learnt just English and there he met a few children who spoke Spanish, the kids were from Peru, Argentina, Mexico and Chile.

From then on it was a bit easier for him to live in this country. Some of my dreams were to work hard, save money to bring my family here, my boy's education and to save money to buy a house.

In the beginning I was in shock, it was so different, no one talked to us, plus we did not speak any English. I remember we went for a walk with my son to look for children who he could play with (there were no kids on the street) and my son asked: "What are we doing here?" "I want to go back to Chile!!" That time was so hard.

I started English classes in Footscray where I found some people who spoke Spanish from my country and others too, nice and friendly people. The teachers were so lovely and tried to help me very much.

Now I am use to it here, and I love living in this country but I am always missing my family, my customs, culture, people on the street, to go and buy fresh bread every morning and talk with the baker, to have tea with my mum and dad under our big tree in my house, to watch television in my language. The simple everyday things.



Spain



Dolores Perez

Arrived 1990

My name is Dolores, I come from Spain. I came with my family from a small city; it is very famous for its wine. We

travelled from my city to the capital Madrid by train and from there by plane to Australia, it was a very long trip.

I arrived in Australia in 1990 with my husband and three children. My boy was 10 years old and two girls, one 12 and the older one 15.

My first impressions were that it was a big country. Melbourne was a big city but old, very green and people living in houses with gardens and that made everything feel far away.



Turkey



Neslihan Duygu Karatmanli

Arrived 2011

I came first to Sydney from Turkey. I arrived on 20th September 2011. I came with my husband. My trip was very

nice. We came by aeroplane. My husband was there for me. I didn't know how to speak English so my husband helped me to learn.

I think Australia is a very beautiful place. Australian people are very friendly and I like it here. My biggest dream is to spend a beautiful life in Australia with my husband.

My first impressions of Australia were that it was a very different country with very different people. Everything is different, but I am happy now, because I love Australia and I love my husband.



I started an English language course; this helped me to meet people. I have met people slowly and of course, my husband has helped me to socialize. I miss my family but I always call them so we talk a lot.

Yugoslavia



Gordana Zuklic
Arrived 1998

I came from Yugoslavia in 1998 to visit my daughter who lived in Sydney. I came with my husband by plane.

Travelling for 22 hours, first we stayed in Vienna, then in Kuala Lumpur and finally in Sydney. It was long trip but very exciting.

My first impressions of Sydney were that it had a lot of National Parks and many houses had been built next to them. Australian people were friendly, relaxed and much happier than my country. Sydney was very hilly like my Belgrade. The climate was much better and warmer.



My dream of living in Australia was to have all my family here. I always wanted to have them close to me. When I first came here it was a terrible feeling because I didn't speak English. I brought my dog and nobody wanted us with the dog in an apartment. I was shocked.

I started my English classes to help me get involved in the Australian society. I like to go shopping and try to meet people. My life is different now than I had in Zagreb. I miss everything but I have learnt to live more happily.

Vietnam



Cuom Huynh

Arrived 1982

I came from Vietnam and I arrived in Australia in 1982.
I came here with my husband but most of my family are in

the USA and one sister is in France. Now I have three children. All of them are grown up now, two have jobs and one is at university.

I escaped from Vietnam by boat in 1981. We floated around on the ocean for three days, we thought the boat was going to sink, luckily we were rescued by a German ship and they took us to a Philippine refugee camp. We stayed there for eighteen months. Then we were accepted by an Australia delegation in the Philippines. Two months later, we flew to Australia by plane.



My first impressions of Australia were that it was a peaceful, friendly place. People have freedom. Also the air is fresh. My dreams were to have freedom, a job, a family and a house. The challenges were English, adapting to a new culture, the weather and to know how to go from one place to another.

Now I stay at home to look after the family, my husband goes to work and I go to Williamstown Community and Education Centre (WCEC) to learn English and computer skills for a while.

Thanks to the WCEC, I can meet some friends and improve my English and computer skills. It has been a very big journey from one home to another.

Nha Tran

Arrived 1996

I came from Vietnam and I arrived in Australia in 1996. My daughter and my sons came with me because they were already living here. I came to Australia by aeroplane, from Ho Chi Minh City to Melbourne.

The first time I came to Australia, I noticed the air, it was very clean, I heard the birds, they were singing. In Vietnam it is too hot and very dirty. In Australia the winter season is much colder than Vietnam and in Australia, in the winter it has snow and is very beautiful. I thought that living here was like being in heaven.

It was very difficult for me to learn English so I went to AMES to enrol to learn English. When I went there the teacher helped me learn a lot about the Australian society. I miss my home country, my daughter, my friends and my garden.



Xoa Kim Tran

Arrived 1986

I came from Vietnam and I arrived in Australia in 1986. I came by myself. I came on a small boat from Can Tho to Malaysia. After that, I came on another boat to Australia. It took a long time and it was very dangerous.

When I arrived in Australia, I noticed that the air was very clean. In Australia the winter season is much colder than Vietnam. I was thinking that living here was like living in heaven. It was very difficult for me to learn English so I went to AMES. I miss my family in my country.



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“We may run, walk, stumble. drive, or fly, but let us never lose sight of the reason for the journey, or miss a chance to see a rainbow on the way.” ~ Gloria Gaither