



Australian Government

**Department of Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs**

From the side stream into the mainstream: women and migration in Australia

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Arriving in Australia in December 1965

- The White Australia Policy was still operating;
- Australians still required to identify as British subjects;
- Indigenous Australians were not counted in the official national census; and
- Migrants were expected to behave like the white Australian-born people.

Australia's changing demographic

1961 Census

- Overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic
- Some European countries were beginning to rate among the top 10 countries of birth.

2001 Census

- Asian countries now among the top 10 countries of birth.
- Largest increases were people arriving from Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh and Iraq.

Australia's changing attitude toward women

- Women working in the federal public service had to resign when they married – this changed in 1966.
- Equal pay was approved 'in principle' in 1969.
- Jobs were openly labelled 'Men only' or 'Women only' until 1972.
- The Sex Discrimination Act was passed only in 1984.

Women in today's workforce

- While the workforce is still very gendered, it is changing.
 - More women still in clerical, sales and service workers;
 - 22% of the professional workforce are women and this figure is growing.
- Migrant women are part of that change.

Challenges of migration

- Finding: a place to live, schools for your children, and employment.
- Understanding your new country and importantly, making new friends.
- It can also mean learning a new language or learning to handle post-traumatic stress resulting from pre-arrival experiences.

Measuring progress

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia shows that over 90% of new migrants are satisfied or very satisfied with their lives in Australia.

A 2002 study of second generation people showed that most children speak English well by the time they start school – regardless of how well their parents speak English.



- Australia ranks high in a 2006 OECD comparative review of migrants students' performance at high school.
- Australia's managed migration plays a role.
- Of equal or greater influence is the way migrant students are taught.

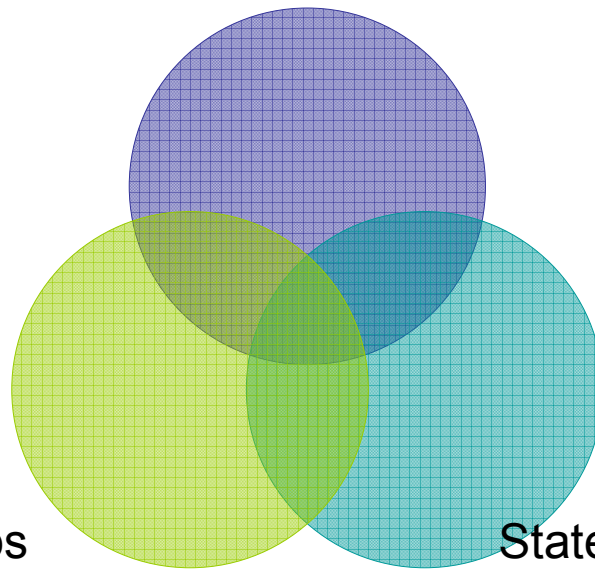
What does this mean for women migrants in Australia?

The government has taken a similar perspective – long term support, with defined objectives to assist migrant women reach their full potential.

- Settlement programmes for refugee and humanitarian migrants.
- Immigration visa regulations to respond to domestic violence issues.
- Cultural diversity projects engaging the entire Australian society, including women.

Australia's support for women migrants

Federal Government



Community groups

State/territory governments

Australia's Humanitarian Programme

- In 2005-06 this programme will provide 13,000 permanent residency visas.
- In the last five years, it has helped to provide refuge to more than 25,000 women.
- In 2005-06 the regional focus is Africa, followed by the Middle East and South West Asia.
- Most women who arrive in Australia through this programme have less than 5 years of schooling and low levels of English and low levels of literacy in their first language.

Settlement programmes for humanitarian entrants

- Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO)
- Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)
- Settlement Grants Programme (SGP)
- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
- Family Relationships Services to Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE)

Migration and special circumstances

- Domestic Violence Provisions of Australia's Migration Programme - Guidelines for allowing people to remain eligible for permanent residence after the breakdown of their relationship due to domestic violence.
- 'Women at Risk' visa sub-category – 10.5% of all Refugee category visas are notionally allocated to this sub-category.

It's not just about the migrants

- Moving to a new country is only half of the migration experience.
- How the host society receives, or fails to receive the migrant is the other half.
- Australia's cultural diversity programmes focus on a 'whole of community' perspective and the things we share.

Engaging with women in migrant communities



- Community Liaison Officer network
- Living in Harmony
- Strength in Diversity Local Government Award
- National Action Plan

National Action Plan to build social cohesion, harmony and security

Women have played, and will continue to play an important role in ensuring that their voice is heard on issues that matter – including security.

Australian Muslim women play an important role.

Women across the country, both Muslim and non-Muslim are coming together to develop a shared feeling of belonging, and an appreciation of the democratic values which provide Australia with its freedom and safety.

Australian migrant women today

In many ways, Australia is very different from the country I came to in 1965.

- There are greater opportunities for women, including migrant women.
- The migration process itself considers women both as partners and as individuals, sometimes needing additional assistance.
- There are greater opportunities today for all women.