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Whose stories are we telling? Exhibitions of migration history in Australian museums 1984-2001

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WHOSE STORIES ARE WE TELLING?

EXHIBITIONS OF MIGRATION HISTORY IN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS 1984 – 2001

EUREKA JANE HENRICH

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Since the introduction of multiculturalism as a public policy in 1973, the peopling of Australia by migrants from many different countries has become a celebrated national narrative. One place where this story has been told is in the nation's museums. Yet the aims and content of Australia's early migration exhibitions, which were among the first in the world, remain unrepresented in the relevant literature. They also remain disconnected from later exhibitions and museums of migration, when in fact they had a profound influence on them. This thesis asks: whose stories were told in Australian exhibitions of immigration history? And how did they change?

To explore these questions, this thesis weaves a history of key exhibitions across institutions. A combination of archival research and interviews with museum curators reveals the complex ideas, decisions and circumstances that shaped these displays. The broader historical and political developments surrounding the opening of the Migration Museum in 1986, the Powerhouse Museum in 1988, the Australian National Maritime Museum in 1991, the Immigration Museum in 1998 and the long gestation of the National Museum of Australia from 1980 until 2001 provide the vital context for the exhibition analyses. A survey of the literature relating to multiculturalism, migration history and museums in Australia locates the chosen exhibitions within wider debates about ethnicity, identity, concepts of heritage and the role of national museums.

I argue that we can understand museum exhibitions about migration in Australia between 1984 and 2001 as operating within two broad and internally variable phases. The first phase, "inventing the nation of immigrants", was characterised by a radical, revisionist and unashamedly multicultural challenge to standard national narratives; the second, "democratising the nation of immigrants", by a more conservative and inclusive approach that, in an attempt to include all Australians in the migration story, distanced itself from political controversy. The findings bring into question assumptions about the 'multicultural era' in Australian history, and reveal that museums, as sites of public history, as disseminators and reflectors of ideas, education and debate, richly repay the attention of historians long after their exhibitions have been dismantled.

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Museums create intellectual interest from the tensions they generate and manifest: by presenting the real in the place of the remembered; by challenging myth with reality, or myths with new myths; by creating a material reality of the only imagined; by telling us more or offering alternate stories to those we have subliminally accepted.

Kay Daniels

Museums are full of stories, and they are quite likely to contradict one another: they are institutions that struggle to impose linearity on the labyrinth, order on the attic – but fail gloriously. May they go on failing! May they go on defying those rationalising managers who will want to groom them into sleek, utterly consistent institutions, their mission statements resonant in every caption. There are no better places to be adventurous amongst the evidence, interdisciplinary, even undisciplined, and to be continuously reminded of the contingencies of interpretation. They are places where historians, with their eclecticism, their holism, and their love of stories should especially feel at home.

Tom Griffiths

Abstract

Since the introduction of multiculturalism as a public policy in 1973, the peopling of Australia by migrants from many different countries has become a celebrated national narrative. One place where this story has been told is in the nation's museums. Yet the aims and content of Australia's early migration exhibitions, which were among the first in the world, are unrepresented in the relevant literature. They also remain disconnected from later exhibitions and museums of migration, when in fact they had a profound influence on them. This thesis asks: whose stories were told in Australian exhibitions of immigration history? And how did they change?

To explore these questions, this thesis weaves a history of key exhibitions across institutions. A combination of archival research and interviews with museum curators reveals the complex ideas, decisions and circumstances that shaped these displays. The broader historical and political developments surrounding the opening of the Migration Museum in 1986, the Powerhouse Museum in 1988, the Australian National Maritime Museum in 1991, the Immigration Museum in 1998 and the long gestation of the National Museum of Australia from 1980 until 2001 provide the vital context for the exhibition analyses. A survey of the literature relating to multiculturalism, migration history and museums in Australia locates the chosen exhibitions within wider debates about ethnicity, identity, concepts of heritage and the role of national museums.

I argue that we can understand museum exhibitions about migration in Australia between 1984 and 2001 as operating within two broad and internally variable phases. The first phase, "inventing the nation of immigrants", was characterised by a radical, revisionist and unashamedly multicultural challenge to standard national narratives; the second, "democratising the nation of immigrants", by a more conservative and inclusive approach that, in an attempt to include all Australians in the migration story, distanced itself from political controversy. The findings bring into question assumptions about the 'multicultural era' in Australian history, and reveal that museums, as sites of public history, as disseminators and reflectors of ideas, education and debate, richly repay the attention of historians long after their exhibitions have been dismantled.

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The process of producing this thesis would have been far less enjoyable were it not for the humour and companionship of my fellow postgraduate students at UNSW. To everyone who I've shared chats, coffees and lunches with, thank you.

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Abbreviations

ABA	Australian Bicentennial Authority
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACPEA	Australian Council of Population and Ethnic Affairs
AEAC	Australian Ethnic Affairs Council
ANMM	Australian National Maritime Museum
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CFAC	Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee
DASET/DASETT	Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, (Tourism) and Territories
DIEA/DIMA	Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs/ Department Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DP	Displaced Person
EAC	Ethnic Affairs Commission
EAPS	Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement
EIIM	Ellis Island Immigration Museum
History Trust	History Trust of South Australia
HCA	Heritage Collections in Australia (a working group of the Cultural Ministers' Council)
HPBM	Hyde Park Barracks Museum
IMM	Immigration Museum, Melbourne
IHS	Italian Historical Society
JMA	Jewish Museum of Australia
MAAS	Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
MHC	Migration Heritage Centre NSW

MMSA	Migration Museum South Australia
MV	Museum Victoria
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NMA	National Museum of Australia
para	paragraph
PHM	Powerhouse Museum
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SOCOG	Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games
TGAJ	*The Great Australian Journey,* ABA Travelling Exhibition, 1988
TFC	*Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788-1998*, exhibition at the ANMM, 1998
TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
WA Museum	Western Australian Museum

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A note on presentation

Exhibition and gallery names are italicized throughout this thesis. When final exhibition texts are quoted at length, they also appear in italics.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The case for a history of exhibitions

> *...for the past 200 years and to this day, we have been a nation of immigrants.*
> Prime Minister Bob Hawke, Australia Day Bicentennial Address, 26 January 1988.

> *There is an immigration story in the life or family history of every non-Indigenous Victorian.*
> Immigration Museum, Melbourne, Communication Objective, 1998.

> *Modern Australia is an immigration nation, but one hundred years ago, this wasn't the plan...This is the secret history of us.*
> SBS 'Immigration Nation' documentary, screened January 2011.

Since the introduction of policies of multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s, the peopling of Australia by migrants from many different countries has become a celebrated national narrative. Australia is described as a "nation of immigrants", most Australians share "immigration stories" in their family histories and immigration is also seen to define the essence of "modern Australia". This popularity can be attributed to the story's ability to both encompass and transcend previous narratives of national identity – from the egalitarian nation, where there is "no hierarchy of descent" and "no privilege of origin", to the pioneer legend.[1] Re-imagined as 'immigrants', pioneers and newcomers alike have equal claim to the heritage of the nation, or as Prime Minister Bob Hawke affirmed in 1988, "we share together this vast continent as our homeland".

Museums have played an important part in telling these stories of nation, but unlike commemorative speeches which invoke myths of nationhood to simplify the past,

[1] "Speech by the Prime Minister The Hon R J L Hawke AC MP, Australia Day, Opera House – Sydney, 26 January 1988," Uni SA , Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, http://www.archivaldatabase.library.unisa.edu.au/fedora/get/uuid:I958/CONTENT0. For further discussion of this speech see James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image,* Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2004, p. 176 and Mark McKenna, "Australia Day: How did it become Australia's national day?" in Marilyn Lake et al, (eds), *What's Wrong With Anzac? The Militarization of Australian History,* Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010, p. 121.

museum curators, like historians, have constantly sought to reveal the past's underlying complexities and contradictions.[2] They are also keenly aware of how the past is translated in the present. A recent television documentary, *Immigration Nation*, tempted viewers with the promise to tell the "secret history of us", the story of "how modern multicultural Australia was forged against the odds".[3] However, the adoption of a critical perspective on immigration history is not a new phenomenon. This so-called "secret history" has been the subject of museum exhibitions in Australia for almost thirty years. It is important, then, to ask, 'whose stories have they told?'

This thesis examines how immigration history has been exhibited in Australian museums from 1984 until 2001. It is a previously unexplored 'history of exhibitions', spanning two decades of profound ideological change in museums and in the writing and popular understandings of Australian history. Despite the recognition by many historians that museums are important sites of public history, exhibitions about migration history remain largely unexamined in debates about the past and its politics. A lack of documentary evidence has been cited as the reason for this oversight, yet this project has unearthed a wealth of useful sources which challenge that assumption.[4] This new evidence forms the basis for an analysis of key exhibitions, which are in turn located in their social and historical contexts: as products of particular institutional cultures; as historical 'texts' designed for a broad public audience; and as reactions to and interactions with government policies and debates over immigration and national identity.

The timeframe of this study covers roughly the same historical period as the policy of multiculturalism, which was established by the Whitlam government, solidified under Fraser, continued through the Hawke and Keating years, and changed in meaning and significance under Howard. It includes the formation of the world's first dedicated

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[2] See Graeme Davison, "The Great Voyage: National celebrations in three new lands," in *The Use and Abuse of Australian History,* St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 56-79.

[3] Alex West (writer/producer), *Immigration Nation* [videorecording], first broadcast 9, 16, and 23 January 2011 on SBS Television, http://www.sbs.com.au/immigrationnation/videos.

museum of migration history, the Migration Museum in Adelaide, which was established in 1983 and opened to the public in 1986.[5] It also encompasses the early history of the National Museum of Australia, which was brought into being by the 1980 Museum of Australia Act, and eventually opened in its own purpose-built premises on the Acton Peninsula in Canberra in 2001. From the Bicentenary build-up of the 1980s to the Centenary of Federation, the narrative of immigration had been a common feature of celebrations of the Australian nation. Yet this period is also one in which those celebrations have been increasingly contested. Exhibitions about migration history are key public sites where these debates have taken place.

In order to explore these public sites and the contested ideas they have presented, I focus on exhibitions from five key museums - the Migration Museum of South Australia, Adelaide (MMSA); the National Museum of Australia, Canberra (NMA); the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney (ANMM); the Immigration Museum, Melbourne (IMM); and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney (PHM).[6] These were all self-consciously 'new museums' in the 1980s or 1990s, designed to be more inclusive, accessible, and attractive than their 'old' counterparts. To gain a deeper insight into the ideas and circumstances which shaped exhibitions about migration, I conducted interviews with ten curators. These interviews, combined with extensive archival research and site visits, have for the first time made possible an historical reconstruction of the introduction and development of migration history narratives in Australian museums.

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[4] See Ian McShane, "Challenging or Conventional? Migration history in Australian museums," in Darryl McIntyre and Kirsten Wehner (eds), *Negotiating histories: national museums: conference proceedings*, Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2001, 122-33.

[5] It was originally called the 'Migration and Settlement Museum'. The name was shortened in 1988. Throughout this thesis it is referred to as the Migration Museum or the MMSA (Migration Museum South Australia). There is an international precursor to the MMSA, although the curators were not aware of it at the time. The Immigrant Institute was founded in Stockholm in 1973 as a library and archive dedicated to research about immigrants and emigrants in Sweden. It relocated to Boras in 1975, and held its first temporary exhibition in 1974. Three permanent exhibitions were developed during the 1980s. The Institute has recently closed. Personal communication with Director, Miguel Benito, 18 May 2012. There is a brief history on the Immigrant Institute website, http://www.immi.se/insti/english.htm.

The first exhibitions of migration history at the MMSA, the PHM and the NMA in the 1980s were part of a broader interest in social history, including the experiences of various hitherto marginalised 'others' such as women, the working classes and Aboriginal Australians. They were also part of a movement, propelled by the official rhetoric of multiculturalism, to represent and celebrate the cultural heritage of all Australians. While these early exhibitions addressed many aspects of the migration experience, they focused almost exclusively on those who arrived, rather than those who left. This reflects the function of museums within the post-colonial settler nation, as sites where the experiences of different immigrant groups are exhibited, and where immigration narratives are directly linked with nation-building. Historian of immigration Nancy Green has observed that the bias towards arrivals in migration studies has been informed by "the highly public politics of immigration, the places from which we write (the countries of immigration), the sources most readily available, and the languages we know".[7] In the "classical countries of immigration" such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, recent histories of large-scale immigration are naturally the focus of scholarship.[8] The situation is more complex in Europe, where emigration and immigration museums co-exist. However, unlike Australia or the United States, migration in these museums is not imbued with overt narratives of national identity.[9]

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[6] One exhibition from Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1984 is also included. At the time Hyde Park Barracks, like the Powerhouse Museum, was part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

[7] Nancy L. Green, "The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 77, no. 2, June 2005, 264.

[8] Stephen Castles and Mark J.Miller, *The Age of Migration*, Basingstoke, England and New York: Macmillan, 2003, p. 7. Castles and Miller argue that the second half of the twentieth century is best seen as "age of migration", where even countries that had been traditional zones of emigration began receiving migrants.

It appears curious then that the first museum to specifically address immigrant experiences in Australia was called the *Migration* and Settlement Museum, and that twelve years later, an *Immigration* Museum opened in Melbourne. Rather than indicating differing approaches, the names of these museums signify the fact that the two terms are in many cases used interchangeably (the Migration Museum's own guidebook describes it as a museum of "immigration and settlement history").[10] "Migration" has two standard meanings. The first is "the movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc., to settle in another".[11] This definition is very close to that of "immigration" which is "the action of immigrating; entrance into a country for the purpose of settling there" – both have an emphasis on a single journey, with settlement as the endpoint, although "immigration" is more readily associated with restrictions on entry put in place by modern nation states.[12] To immigrate successfully implies an entrance through these national barriers or borders. In contrast, the second meaning of "migration" suggests a broader application: "the seasonal movement or temporary removal of a person, people, social group, etc., from one place to another".[13] This meaning is related to the term "migratory", which when applied to people can refer to those who are "nomadic" or "given to travelling".[14] Migration within the nation, or emigration away from it, was not generally represented as part of the migration experience in exhibitions during the 1980s and 1990s. Writing about American scholarship, Green notes "it is more difficult to count those who leave than those who arrive; it is difficult to write a history of absence".[15] Similarly, for museums it has been more difficult to collect the stories and material

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[9] The Merseyside Maritime Museum and the National Maritime Museum in the UK both address the issue of emigration. See Phyllis Leffler, "Peopling the Portholes: National Identity and Maritime Museums in the U.S. and U.K.," *The Public Historian*, vol. 26, no. 4, Fall 2004, 23-48. The *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, opened in Paris in 2007. For a Franco-American comparison of immigration museums see Nancy L. Green, "A French Ellis Island? Museums, Memory and History in France and the United States," *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 63, no. 1, April 2007, 239-53. Emigration museums or research centres exist in Lebanon, Norway, Germany, Sweden and Denmark. For a list of all immigration and emigration institutions see the Migration Institutions Network website, part of the UNESCO and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Migration Museums Initiative, http://www.migrationmuseums.org/web/.

[10] Christine Finnimore, *Migration Museum*, Adelaide: Migration Museum, 2008, p. 1.

[11] "migration, n.". Oxford English Dictionary Online, September 2011, Oxford University Press.

[12] "immigration, n.". Oxford English Dictionary Online, September 2011, Oxford University Press.

[13] "migration, n.". OED Online, Ibid.

[14] "migratory, adj. and n.". Oxford English Dictionary Online, December 2011, Oxford University Press.

[15] Green, "The Politics of Exit," 286.

culture of those who have left. Almost all of the exhibitions analysed in this thesis tell the stories of those who came and settled, and the terms migration and immigration are both used to refer to the process by which these migrants arrived in the country.

However, it is not only the process of immigration that is the focus of these museums, or indeed the focus of the broader historical study of migration history in Australia. Historian of memory and migration Alistair Thompson has described the "physical passage of migration from one place to another" as only one event within a broader "migration experience". This migration experience, "which continues throughout the life of the migrants and into subsequent generations" has been the subject of exhibitions of migration from the mid 1980s.[16] This is why the Migration Museum in Adelaide was initially called the Migration *and Settlement* Museum, a decision that was reversed in 1988 as it was deemed too 'wordy' to attract visitors. Likewise, the Immigration Museum in Melbourne aimed to attract a wide audience through an exploration of the "immigration story" in the life or family history of all non-Indigenous Victorians, suggesting an experience that goes beyond the initial journey and has inter-generational resonances. Individual exhibitions at other Australian museums have focused on different aspects of the migration experience, including hostel accommodation, children's memories, cultural traditions and community-building.[17] In the past ten years there has been a notable shift towards a more global or transnational perspective on the movement of peoples across national borders, reflecting broader trends in academic scholarship.[18] Themes of citizenship, belonging,

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[16] Alistair Thompson, "Moving Stories: Oral History and Migration Studies," *Oral History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1999, 24. The study of historical memory arose as a field of inquiry in Australia in the early 1990s. See Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory & History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994. A more recent work is Marilyn Lake (ed), *Memory, Monuments and Museums: The Past in the Present*, Cartlon, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2006.

[17] Hostel accommodation and children's experiences were features of the original MMSA permanent galleries of 1986, the *Australian Communities* gallery at the PHM in 1988 and *Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788 – 1988* at the ANMM in 1998. Cultural traditions of immigrant groups and the processes by which communities are built in particular areas were features of both *Survival* at the NMA in 1988 and *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton* at Museum Victoria in 1995. These exhibitions are analysed in the following chapters.

[18] See Green, "Reversing the Immigration Paradigm," 265. For an overview on the development of the field of transnational studies see Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt (eds), *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections and Innovations*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008, especially Chapter 1, "Constructing Transnational Studies."

place-making, diasporas and identity politics have characterised recent exhibitions and publications.[19] There is a tendency in the secondary literature to view these recent exhibitions as innovative, compared to earlier, less critical or 'multicultural', migration exhibitions. However, this thesis identifies key exhibitions from the 1980s and 1990s as important forerunners to these more recent shifts. It thus lays the essential groundwork for a better informed assessment of how migration has been understood in Australian museums.

Historiography

Immigration exhibitions in Australia have developed alongside and in relation to the field of migration studies, and in particular, migration history. The study of migration has always been interdisciplinary, attracting the attention of anthropologists, sociologists, economists, demographers, political scientists, and historians.[20] Early sociological work on ethnic minorities in Australia by demographers such as W.D. Borrie and Charles Price was assimilationist at heart, reflecting international post-war trends.[21] Typical of the broader literature on Australian history at the time, their work assumed the maintenance of a predominantly white British-Australia, and therefore positioned non-British Australians as outside and alien to the nation's culture and traditions.[22] However, the study of Displaced Persons (DPs) in Australia following the Second World War saw the emergence of new scholarly interpretations. By shedding light on the problems experienced by the DPs, demographers and psychologists such

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[19] See Eureka Henrich, "Identity: Yours Mine Ours," (exhibition review), *recollections*, vol. 6, no. 2, October 2011, http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_6_no_2/exhibition_reviews/identity/. For discussion of 'place' and ethnographic history as a preferable theoretical framework to diversity or 'multiple voices' for exhibiting pluralism within the national community see Mathew Trinca and Kirsten Wehner, "Pluralism and exhibition practice at the National Museum of Australia," in Chris Healy and Andrea Witcomb (eds), *South Pacific Museums: Experiments in Culture*, Monash ePress, 2006, http://www.epress.monash.edu/spm/.

[20] See Caroline Brettell and James Frank Hollifield, *Migration Theory: talking across disciplines*, New York: Routledge, 2000, vii.

[21] Borrie and Price identified long-established non-British communities as remnants of "old worlds", foreign to British-Australia and as cases in point for the need to culturally assimilate and numerically limit future non-British arrivals. For example see W.D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: a study of assimilation*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1954; W.D.Borrie, *British People for the Commonwealth,* Canberra: Federal Capital Press, 1958; C.A.Price, *Migrants in Australian Society*, Melbourne: Commonwealth Department of Immigration, 1968.

[22] See Hsu-Ming Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories: an overview of ethnic historiography," in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003, pp. 142-157. See also Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993,* St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994, especially the introduction, iv-xiv.

as H.B.M. Murphy, Jean Martin, Jerzy Zubrzycki, and James Jupp began to critique assimilationist policies, revealing their ineffectiveness in integrating new arrivals into Australian society. As Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth observed in 1984, this critique encouraged "the more enlightened Australian politicians and advisors [to] recognise both the sterility and cruelty of assimilation and the impossibility of its application".[23]

Mark Lopez, in *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-1975*, dubs the work of these scholars "anti-assimilationism" and argues that from the mid-late 1960s they began to develop an alternative model, which he calls "proto-multiculturalism".[24] The political machinations that saw the shift from assimilation to proto-multiculturalism and finally a fully-fledged "multiculturalist scene" and government ideology by the mid-1970s are the focus of Lopez's book. By tracing the differing ideas and output of these early researchers, he delineates four varieties of multiculturalism which had emerged before 1975 - cultural pluralism, welfare multiculturalism, ethnic structural pluralism and ethnic rights multiculturalism. Lopez also puts to rest assumptions such as the extent to which Canadian models of multiculturalism influenced Australian ones (very little), and the role of particular politicians in defining the policy (Whitlam's immigration minister Al Grassby was less instrumental than earlier accounts suggest). In fact, Lopez finds that the group of people who did profoundly shape Australian multiculturalism was fairly small, and their individual roles have been ironically obscured in their own writings.[25] One of these people, Jerzy Zubrzycki, also played a key role in the development of the first collection of national ethnic heritage in Australia.

Lopez reveals Zubrzycki as a "key definer" of the cultural pluralist strand of multiculturalism. A founding professor of sociology at the Australian National

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[23] Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia: The post-war migrant experience*, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1984, p. 25; Jayne Persian, "'People with Problems': Displaced Persons (at the Edge) or Academics, Displaced Persons and Multiculturalism," Conference Paper presented at the AHA 2011 Regional Conference, Launceston, Tasmania, July 2011, manuscript courtesy of the author.
[24] Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945-75*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000, p. 2.
[25] Ibid, p. 23.

University, Zubrzycki was also a member of the Foundation Council for the NMA between 1980 and 1982 and co-authored the Council's blueprint for the new museum, the 1982 report titled *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia*.[26] He was thus intimately connected to the philosophy of the proposed national museum from the beginning, and, along with Hungarian former DP Egon F Kunz, shaped the Museum's collections as a consultant in the development of the ethnic heritage collection between 1988 and 1995.[27] Zubrzycki continued his association with the NMA throughout his life, concurrently acting in other government advisory roles, such as his membership of the John Howard-appointed National Multicultural Advisory Council (1997-1999).[28] As one of the key definers of Australia multiculturalism, and one of the first people involved in collecting 'ethnic heritage', Zubrzycki's writings provide an important context to the NMA exhibitions examined in this thesis.

The close relationship between exhibitions of migration history and multiculturalism in Australia makes the field of multicultural scholarship of particular contextual importance. Seminal publications include those by academics at the University of Wollongong's Centre for Multicultural Studies, who critiqued multicultural policy on the basis of its limited ability to effect social change. Andrew Jackubowicz, Michael Morrissey and Joanne Palser's 1984 book *Ethnicity, Class and Social Policy in Australia* was the first of these, while a later publication *Mistaken Identity: multiculturalism and the demise of nationalism in Australia* by Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis and Michael Morrissey built on the earlier work.[29] Lopez notes that the authors of

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[26] Museum of Australia, Interim Council, *The plan for the development of the Museum of Australia*, Canberra: Museum of Australia, December 1982.

[27] Zubrzycki's writings and conference papers track the development of the ethnic heritage collection at the Museum, (later renamed the 'migrant' heritage collection). They include "Ethnic Heritage in a Multicultural Australia," in Donald F. McMichael (editor), *Australian Museums – Collecting and Presenting Australia, Proceedings of the Council of Australian Museum Associations Conference*, 1990, pp. 35-36; *Ethnic heritage: an essay in museology,* Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 1992; *Migrant Heritage. A Guide to the Collections,* Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 1992, co-authored by with Glen Cook, and *White Australia: Tolerance and intolerance in race relations,* Canberra: National Museum of Australia Occasional Paper, 1995. For information on Egon F Kunz's see Attila J.Urmenyhazi, "Egon Kunz," Migration Heritage Centre NSW website, http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/stories/tell-us-your-story/egon-kunz/.

[28] Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics*, pp. 449-450.

[29] Andrew Jackubowicz, Michael Morrissey and Joanne Palser, *Ethnicity, Class and Social Policy in Australia*, Kensington, NSW: Social Welfare Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 1984; Stephen Castles et al, *Mistaken Identity: multiculturalism and the demise of nationalism in Australia*,

Mistaken Identity were:

> ...involved in a historical revisionist exercise of reinterpreting Australian social and intellectual history from the perspective of values drawn from the ideological canons of 'political correctness', for example anti-racism and anti-sexism.

As a result, they promoted their own "'politically corrected' version of multiculturalism".[30] Similar values were held by historians working in the new museums of the 1980s, whose work was influenced by movements in feminist and labour histories.[31] The exhibitions they curated demonstrate an acute historical awareness of gender, class and race that goes far beyond the official rhetoric of multiculturalism.[32] These historians were engaging with Australian and international scholarship belonging to the 'new social history', of which E.P Thompson's classic *The Making of the English Working Class* was the catalyst.[33] Tony Bennett observed the immediate effect of these "intellectual currents" in the social history bent of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, which opened in Sydney in 1984.[34] This museum was home to the earliest permanent exhibition of migration history in Australia – a small gallery called *The Changing Faces of Sydney*.

The critique of mainstream multiculturalism offered by Castles, Jackubowicz and others was part of a broader literature on multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s, a good deal of which was published in collaboration with the Office of Multicultural

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Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988. Jakubowicz remains engaged in the critique and development of multiculturalism in Australia, and has compiled an extensive internet resource, "Making Multicultural Australia", which makes available key documents, interviews and other information relevant to multicultural policy and Australian political and cultural history. See http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/. See also Andrew Jakubowicz, "White Noise: Australia's struggle with multiculturalism," in Cynthia Levine-Rasky (editor), *Working through Whiteness: International perspectives*, Albany, NY: State University of NY Press, 2002, pp. 107-128, and Stephen Castles and Ellie Vasta (eds), *The teeth are smiling, persistence of racism in multicultural Australia*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

[30] Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics,* p. 15.

[31] Tony Bennett, "Museums and 'the people'," in Robert Lumley (editor), *The Museum Time Machine: Putting cultures on display*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 78.

[32] For Margaret Anderson's recent account of this history see "Museums, history and the creation of memory, 1970 – 2008," in Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2011, http://www.nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/MAnderson_2011.html.

[33] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1963.

[34] Bennett, "Museums and 'the people'," pp. 77-78.

Affairs.[35] These include Judith Winternitz's *Australia's Hidden Heritage* (1990), a photographic catalogue of clothing, technology, arts and crafts held in public and private collections demonstrating Australia's cultural diversity, and Amareswar Galla's *Training as Access: Guidelines for the development of heritage curricula and cultural diversity* (1993).[36] Both works addressed the importance of material culture associated with migration, but with very different conceptions of 'heritage' and 'cultural diversity'. Zubrzycki referenced Winternitz's book in 1990 when reflecting on the philosophical challenge posed by the need to define the term 'cultural diversity' in the original 1980 charter of the NMA. Although he could offer no solution, he did reflect that surely cultural diversity possessed "a much wider meaning than the colourful costumes, jewellery, pottery or devotional objects included in Judy Winternitz' *Australia's Hidden Heritage".*[37] Galla, who describes himself as a "NESB museologist", agreed, and in his recommendations for the training of museum workers encouraged an appreciation of both the tangible and intangible heritage of all Australians.[38] Like the critiques offered by Jakubowicz and Castles, Galla's perspective was that institutional change had to occur in order for multiculturalism to translate from political rhetoric to reality. He saw museums as essential to this change:

> Museums, as one of the key institutions managing cultural heritage, have a critical role in the processes of psychological decolonisation and the construction of positive preferred futures through community cultural development.[39]

The potential for museums to contribute to social change was also the focus of the 1988 conference *New responsibilities: documenting multicultural Australia*, which drew together personnel from museums, galleries, libraries and archives across the

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[35] The Office of Multicultural Affairs was a body established in 1987 under the Hawke Government in response to the 1986 *Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services*, as a gesture to symbolise the government's commitment to multiculturalism and ethnic communities. It was abolished soon after the Howard Government came to power in 1996. See James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 54.
[36] Judith Winternitz, *Australia's hidden heritage*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990; Amareswar Galla, *Training as access: guidelines for the development of heritage curricula and cultural diversity,* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993.
[37] Zubrzycki, "Ethnic Heritage in a Multicultural Australia," p. 35.
[38] Amareswar Galla, "Desultory Remarks from a NESB Museologist," *Artlink,* vol. 11, nos. 1&2, 1990, 26-27.
[39] Galla, *Training as access*, p. 1.

nation.[40] The conference contributed directly to the adoption one of the eight goals of the 1989 *Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, which stated that "Australian institutions should acknowledge, reflect and respond to the cultural diversity of the Australian community".[41] In exhibitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s - the period I characterise as the first phase of migration history exhibitions in Australia - the tension between exhibiting material culture simply as "hidden heritage" on one hand, and interrogating a superficial representation of cultural identity on the other, is clear. Curators were keen to avoid a simplistic narrative where migrant 'contributions' to the dominant culture were uncritically celebrated. Yet for many migrant groups, it was this positive version of their history that they wished to present.[42] Knowledge of the circumstances in which these tensions were negotiated, between communities and museums, is crucial to any assessment or critique of past exhibitions, yet remains largely absent in recent scholarship.

Zubrzycki's role in the development of the ethnic heritage collection at the NMA was an important one, not only for the history of that institution, but for critiques of migration history exhibitions in Australia which have emerged in the past decade. Ian McShane, who worked as a social history curator at the NMA in the 1990s, has acknowledged the pioneering role of Zubrzycki and Kunz in establishing the ethnic heritage collection. However, he also identified the way this collecting practice contributed to the conceptual limitations of migration history. McShane first aired these ideas at a conference at the NMA in July 1999.[43] He argued that the emergence of migration history in museums was connected to the rise of multiculturalism as the "dominant national ethic", and that as a result of this shared interest, and for fear of

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[40] Margaret Birtley and Patricia McQueen (eds), *New responsibilities: documenting multicultural Australia,* Melbourne: Museums Association of Australia Inc. Victorian Branch and Library Council of Victoria, 1989.

[41] For discussion see Viv Szekeres, "Museums and Multiculturalism: Too vague to understand, too important to ignore," in Griffin and Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, 2011, http://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/VSzekeres_2011.html.

[42] For example see Margaret Anderson, "The Changing Museum - Rhetoric or reality? Or exhibiting history in a post-politically correct world," in Ian Walters et al (eds), *Unlocking Museums: Proceedings of the 4th National Conference of Museums Australia Inc,* Northern Territory: Museums Australia NT Branch, 1997, pp. 304-309.

[43] The conference was called *National Museums, Negotiating Histories*. See McShane, "Challenging or conventional? Migration history in Australian museums."

endorsing opponents of multiculturalism, museum approaches to migration history have remained limited, stuck in the time warp of the 'multicultural era'. As a result, McShane posited, these exhibitions tended to focus on post-war migration, limiting broader histories of "colonialisation, empire, trade and population policy".[44] He noted that exhibitions had not come to terms with the uncomfortable position of Indigenous people within the narrative of migration; that they conceived of migration as only a one-way process, and so told a history of ethnic arrivals who enriched the Anglo core-culture.

Most powerful was this last critique of the "enrichment narrative", as McShane called it, because it could be applied to nearly every exhibition where migrant contributions were recognised and celebrated. McShane adapted the enrichment argument from the radical critique of multiculturalism offered by Ghassan Hage in his 1998 book, *White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society*.[45] Hage, an anthropologist and social theorist, wrote *White Nation* as an examination of white responses to multiculturalism. In it he argues that both white "racists", such as Pauline Hanson, and white "multiculturalists", those who openly support cultural and ethnic diversity, both see themselves as "governors" of the national space, and share a desire to maintain that power. In this white national space, ethnics become objects to be governed. White Australians enjoy "having" multiculturalism, consuming it, collecting it and exhibiting it – in other words, controlling it.[46] The narrative of enrichment is consistent with these ideas – migrants add diversity, but their cultures are something that can be possessed and managed by the dominant (white) Australian cultural governors. This argument was given added weight by McShane, who claimed that the Department of Immigration provided "substantial sponsorship for museum programs" in order to publicise multicultural policy.[47]

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[44] Ibid, p. 125.
[45] Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society*, Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press, 1998, pp. 150-151. McShane refers mostly to Chapter 3, "Good White Nationalists: The Tolerant Society as a 'White Nation' Fantasy," and Chapter 4, "White Multiculturalism: A Manual for the Proper Usage of Ethnics."
[46] Ibid, p. 139.
[47] McShane, "Challenging or Conventional," pp. 124-125.

The other narrative identified by McShane was the "rebirth narrative", where, despite a much longer history of cultural diversity, post-war migration is seen to mark the 'birth of multicultural Australia'. In his estimation, both narratives made extensive use of two striking metaphors – the migrant's *journey*, and the *barriers* they must overcome to enter and settle in the host nation. McShane's objection to these standard narratives and metaphors was that they struggle to transcend the 'othering' of the migrant, and in doing so, may perpetuate the very assimilationist ideologies they seek to critique.[48]

McShane's essay marked a turning point in the writing on migration history exhibitions. Until this point, much of the literature came from the curators themselves, reflecting critically on their own practice, often in the form of conference papers.[49] McShane's article proved influential because it provided the first model for understanding and interpreting this genre of exhibitions, one that could be applied to exhibitions from different institutions, and also to exhibitions of different types loosely grouped under the banner of 'migration history'. However, McShane only mentioned three exhibitions specifically. They were *Chops and Changes*, a cross-cultural exhibition of food and cultural traditions shown at the MMSA*, Snowy! Power of a Nation*, a major exhibition at the PHM which told the history of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme (and advertised it as the "birth of multicultural Australia"), and *Tolerance*, an exhibition about cultural diversity aimed at a high school audience that McShane himself curated at the NMA. All three were first exhibited in 1995, providing little if any chronological comparison to test the 'time warp' theory within which museum exhibitions about migration had allegedly remained trapped. In fact the only one that was sponsored by the Department of Immigration was *Tolerance*.[50] The references to

[48] Ibid, p. 125.
[49] The earliest of these is Viv Szekeres, "The use of oral history in museum displays," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987, 112-116. A range of curators' papers were published in Birtley and McQueen (eds), *New Responsibilities: Documenting Multicultural Australia*, 1989. Examples from other MMSA curators include Kate Walsh, "The Challenge of Diversity," in Australian Folk Trust and Victorian Folklife Association, *The 5th National Folklife Conference, traditions, transitions, visions: Folklife in multicultural Australia: Melbourne 6-8 1992*, Civic Square, ACT: Australian Folk Trust, 1993, pp. 84-88, and Christine Finnimore, "Voices of identity: oral history in South Australia's Migration Museum," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 16, 1994, 100-104.
[50] The nature of this sponsorship and how it impacted upon the exhibition is discussed in Chapter 4.

these exhibitions in McShane's article are, in any case, brief and offer only a glimpse of their content and narrative – the only exhibition text panel quoted is from *Chops and Changes*, one that neatly displays the "enrichment narrative" through the development of Australian cuisine after the Second World War.[51] But the major limitation of McShane's article is one that he himself acknowledges: "more spadework is needed to understand how the subject has been developed in Australia, to sustain and invigorate the subject, to defend the territory and to find new fields to work in."[52]

Other scholars have used McShane's schema to pursue critiques and re-evaluations of migration history and community exhibitions across the fields of museology and cultural history. In her 2008 book *Museums, the media and refugees*, Katherine Goodnow devoted a chapter to assessing migrant and refugee exhibitions in Australia and New Zealand.[53] Goodnow states her approach was to "condense a number of analyses of standard metaphors regarding migrant exhibitions by drawing mainly on two" – those of McShane and Hage. Yet as McShane's critique is built on that of Hage, this is in fact only one analysis. Her use of the schema is however more nuanced. She identifies four "types" of exhibitions that move beyond the standard metaphors, which she then places in a chronological continuum – each moving further away from the "traditional representations of immigrant and refugee narratives", with each "move" numbered.[54] Move 1 stays with a standard metaphor, ie. "the journey", but adds to it; Move 2 adds some of the "negative side" to arrival stories; Move 3 is titled "Beyond Separateness – Cutting Across Ethnic and Spatial Boundaries", suggesting exhibitions that address migration thematically or through the experience of multiple groups and places; and finally Move 4, called "Beyond Frozen Identities – Cutting Across Generations, Adding Younger Voices", which cites exhibitions that give voice to "youth culture". These positive moves are contrasted with what Goodnow observes are

[51] Scholars who have adapted McShane's argument use this same section of exhibition text to demonstrate the enrichment narrative, which suggests a lack of primary research. See Katherine Goodnow, *Museums, the Media and Refugees: Stories of Crisis, Control and Compassion,* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008, p. 31, and Andrea Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," *Humanities Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2009, 52.
[52] McShane, "Challenging or Conventional," p. 122.
[53] Goodnow, "Traditional Methods and New Moves: Migrant and Refugee Exhibitions in Australia and New Zealand," in *Museums, the Media and Refugees*, pp. 30-66.

"missing stories", including those migrants who didn't make it to Australia, or those who returned home.

Goodnow's analysis includes exhibitions from eight museums – six from Australia and two from New Zealand – and is enhanced by interviews with the exhibition's curators, an approach that I have also adopted. However, relying on oral history alone, as well as McShane's 1999 article, leads Goodnow to conclude that museums are progressively moving away from "traditional representations". The myth perpetuated in this otherwise erudite chapter is that "early" or "traditional" exhibitions conformed to McShane's schema, and the two examples cited in passing are the same ones originally cited by McShane (*Chops and Changes*, and *Snowy! Power of a Nation*, neither of which is "early" in the history of migration exhibitions).[55] From her interview with Viv Szekeres, the director of the MMSA from 1987 to 2008, Goodnow concludes that early exhibitions were "unsophisticated in their approach", and that "later exhibitions had a much more rigorous historical analysis and included a variety of voices".[56] But what *were* these early exhibitions, and when did this change take place? Only by assessing a number of exhibitions from the same institution, placing temporary exhibitions in the context of permanent ones on display at the same time, and cross-checking dates with other witnesses and museum records, can these details be ascertained.

McShane's ideas are also cited in the 2009 volume of *Humanities Research* entitled *Compelling Cultures: Representing Cultural Diversity and Cohesion in Multicultural Australia*. In the article "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity: Can museums move beyond pluralism?", Andrea Witcomb embarks upon a survey of the representation of migration history in Australian museums, in order to demonstrate the limitations of cultural diversity as a conceptual frame "for the relations between

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[54] Ibid, p. 56.
[55] There is also a factual error. Goodnow writes that the Migration Museum exhibition *A Twist of Fate,* occurred in 1995 (Goodnow, p. 35). However, the exhibition actually opened in 1998, three years later, as part of the Olympic Arts Festival 'A Sea Change'. It is analysed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.
[56] Goodnow, p. 48.

heritage and community or between identity and nation".[57] She too builds on McShane's schema, repeating his account of the confluence of multiculturalism and migration history in museums, stating even more stridently that early exhibitions were "propaganda agencies" for government, and once more quoting the same exhibition text from *Chops and Changes* to demonstrate that "the initial suite of [migration history] exhibitions was largely celebratory in nature and advanced an understanding of multiculturalism as a melting pot".[58] One gets the impression that Witcomb, like McShane before her, has relied on exhibitions that she herself has seen, or been involved with; others are perhaps known of anecdotally.[59] As a result, some factual errors are evident, and the exhibition analysis, while wide, is necessarily shallow in content. It serves as a prelude to the main focus of the article – an examination of *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788*, one of the opening exhibitions at the NMA in 2001, and in particular, the criticism it received from the committee appointed to review the opening exhibitions of the museum.

The other article in the volume *Compelling Cultures* that references McShane's work does so in order to establish a foundation for new approaches to migration history. "Dimensions for a folding exhibition: exhibiting diversity in theory and practice in the *Migration Memories* exhibition" is an account by curator Mary Hutchison of the theoretical underpinnings for her Australian Research Council Linkage project, based at the Australian National University in partnership with the NMA between 2005 and 2008.[60] Hutchison perpetuates the myth of the early or traditional migration exhibition still more than Goodnow and Witcomb. She uses the term "multicultural migration exhibition" to encompass all that was apparently at fault with these early exhibitions:

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[57] Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," 50.
[58] Ibid, 52.
[59] Witcomb is an Associate Professor at Deakin University, and like Goodnow, has a background in media studies and museums. Her work examines the phenomenon of the 'new museum' and has focused on the ANMM (the subject of her PhD thesis), the Museum of Sydney, and the National Museum of Australia, at which she was for a short time a curator, as well as internationally comparative work and an important edited volume on museums across the South Pacific. See Andrea Witcomb, *Reimagining the museum: Beyond the mausoleum*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003 and with Chris Healy (eds), *South Pacific Museums: Experiments in Culture*, Clayton, Vic.: Monash University ePress, 2006.
[60] Mary Hutchison, "Dimensions for a folding exhibition: exhibiting diversity in theory and practice in the *Migration Memories* exhibition," *Humanities Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2009, 70.

> The focus of the multicultural migration exhibition as it emerged was the huge number of newcomers who arrived as part of the Federal Government's revolutionary postwar immigration program. With time, this has been refined and extended.[61]

The inference here is that early exhibitions were by contrast unrefined and narrow in scope. Hutchison uses McShane's schema and Hage's theories to make space for a 'new' approach to migration history, one that, on the basis of the broad research undertaken for this thesis, seems to have much in common with previous approaches.

While Hutchison's critique tells us more about how she has approached her project than it does about past exhibitions, Witcomb's focus on the NMA exhibition *Horizons* is pertinent. She reminds us that governments care what stories are told in museums and, more importantly, *whose* stories. This is equally true of exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s, which need to be seen in their own political contexts – not merely as precursors to later, more sophisticated exhibitions. They were responses to and interactions with other forms of history-making both museological and political, and influenced later exhibitions to a far greater extent than is suggested by McShane's schema or Witcomb's overview. And we must keep in mind that the context for all museum exhibitions is personal as well as political. For example, *Horizons* was the exhibition that McShane was working on when he first presented his thoughts on migration history exhibitions in 1999. Witcomb knew this, but did not make it explicit in her article. We can then see *Horizons* against an earlier migration exhibition McShane curated in 1995 at the NMA, called *Tolerance*. Tracing the institutional lineage back even further we find the 1988 exhibition *Survival*, which was one of the earliest displays of the NMA's ethnic heritage collection. In my account *Horizons* becomes the endpoint of the story – the first permanent national exhibition of Australia's immigration history, and the catalyst for the critical re-appraisal of migration exhibitions of which McShane, Goodnow and Witcomb are a part.

[61] Ibid. Like Goodnow and Witcomb's works there are some factual errors. Hutchison writes that the Migration Heritage Centre NSW opened in 1997, and the Immigration Museum in Melbourne opened in 1999, when in fact they both opened in 1998.

Recent critiques are in fact part of a long tradition of writings by curators of migration history exhibitions. The curators from the MMSA have been prolific writers about migration history exhibitions, and are always frank about the challenges posed by working with and for communities. Viv Szekeres, who began working at the MMSA as a curator in 1983 produced a steady stream of conference papers, book chapters and journal articles throughout her career.[62] Her central theme, that museums are by their very nature political and that those who work in them need to come to terms with this, is developed throughout this oeuvre. Methodological challenges are also revealed – in her first journal article of 1987, soon after the MMSA opened, Szekeres writes that the secondary literature on migration was scarce, forcing curators to engage with communities and conduct oral history programs to collect stories of migration and settlement in South Australia.[63] Szekeres' position is always pro-multicultural, recognising the opportunity that this ethos gave to those who were interested in non-mainstream histories in the 1980s. However, her work also probes the limits of the framework of multiculturalism for examining difference in its many forms, and from

[62] A sample of Viv Szekeres' output includes "The use of oral history in museum displays," 1987; "The problems of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage," in Birtley and McQueen (eds), *New Responsibilities: documenting Multicultural Australia*, 1989; "The Role of Culture-Specific Museums," in Donald F McMichael (ed), *Australian Museums: Collecting and Presenting Australia, Proceedings of the Council of Australian Museum Associations conference, Canberra, ACT Australia 21-24 November 1990*, Canberra: Council of Australian Museums Associations, 1991, pp. 207-211; "Exhibiting conflict – who dares?" in *Artlink*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1992, 18-21; "Resisting Change: Museums and the Politics of Cultural Diversity," paper presented to the Council of Australian Museums Association conference, 1992, manuscript courtesy of the author; "Myths, Meaning and Minefields: The Construction of Reality at the Migration Museum," in Margaret Anderson, Ann Delroy and Deborah Tout-Smith (eds), *Identity, icons and artefacts: proceedings of the inaugural Museums Australia Conference, Fremantle, November 1994*, Perth, WA: Museums Australia, Publications Department Western Australian Museum, 1996, pp. 301-305; "A place for all of us," *Public History Review*, vol. 4, 1995, 59-64; "Representing diversity and challenging racism: the Migration Museum," in Richard Sandell (ed), *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 142-152; "Mind the Gap: Stories of Displacement, Change and Adaptation from the Migration Museum," paper presented to 'Moving Culture, Shifting Identities: a conference about migration, connection, heritage and cultural memory', Flinders University, 2007, manuscript courtesy of the author; "Museums and Multiculturalism: Too vague to understand, too important to ignore," in Griffin and Paroissien, *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*.

[63] See Szekeres, "The use of oral history in museum displays," and "Mind the Gap: Stories of Displacement, Change and Adaptation from the Migration Museum." Literature on immigration history did exist in Australia at the time the MMSA was being developed, but may not have been directly relevant to the South Australian communities the museum was established to work with. The Museum's research occurred in tandem with the growth of a historiography of immigration, rather than pre-empting it.

the early 1990s promotes "cultural diversity" as a way to address topics of identity construction that transcend ethnicity.[64]

Szekeres notes, too, the limitations of museums as spaces where non-mainstream voices can be heard. In a 1995 paper she asked "is it ever possible to tear down the master's house with the master's tools?" In contrast with Witcomb's thesis that museums have always been arbiters between 'high' and 'low' culture, and are not conservative by nature, Szekeres sees the "intrinsic conservatism of the museum" as an ongoing reality, and she positions her work in opposition to outside forces that would seek to either censure or limit its purview.[65] She wrestles continually with the conflict between being a part of the Museum, and seeking change within it. An ongoing theme in her writing is the political machinations of the MMSA – where funding comes from, who has the power to decide what stories are told, and who the intended audience is.[66] Her opinions, always outspoken, become still more vehement after the election of the conservative Howard government in 1996. More recent papers contextualise the redevelopment of the MMSA's galleries in the 2000s, explaining the shift to a global history of colonisation, and immigration to South Australia within it. They also locate the legacy of the MMSA in the context of museum history in Australia.[67]

Other curators at the MMSA grappled with similar issues. In her 1992 address to the National Folklife Conference, curator Kate Walsh chose the theme "The Challenge of Diversity".[68] The issues tackled in Walsh's paper reveal the ethos of the MMSA curators at the time – most notably the idea of "culture as process", which both Walsh and Szekeres linked to the theories set out by Gillian Bottomley in her 1992 book *From Another Place: Immigration and the Politics of Culture*.[69] For Walsh the Anglo-centricity

[64] Szekeres, "Resisting change."
[65] See Witcomb, *Re-imagining the museum*, pp. 13-18; Szekeres, "A Place for All of Us", 60.
[66] Szekeres, "Myths, Meaning and Minefields," p. 302; also "A Place for All of Us," 63.
[67] Szekeres "Mind the Gap," and "Museums and Multiculturalism."
[68] Walsh, "The Challenge of Diversity."
[69] Szekeres discusses this work in her 1992 paper "Resisting Change". Walsh discusses it at length in "The Challenge of Diversity." See Gillian Bottomley, *From Another Place: Immigration and the Politics of Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

of the Australian identity despite a decade of multicultural policies was evidence of the widespread assumption that while mainstream culture changes, "ethnic" cultures are fixed, colourful and exoticized - a "condescending, patronising and marginalising" view.[70] This could be likened to McShane's enrichment narrative – except here it is the curators of the so-called 'early' or 'traditional' migration history exhibitions who acknowledge these problems, and critique the simplistic notions of 'community', 'cultural diversity' and 'ethnicity' that compound them. Like Szekeres, Walsh used exhibitions developed by the MMSA to demonstrate how these ideas could be challenged.

More recent MMSA curators, including current director Christine Finnimore, continue to present papers exploring aspects of the Museum's work and history. Finnimore's 2006 paper "Grief, Protest and Public history: the Memorial Wall in the Migration Museum, Adelaide", tells an important story about the organic development of a wall of community memorial plaques, one that contrasts starkly with more patriotic and contrived migration memorials of individual names developed in the USA and Australia since the 1990s.[71] Again, Finnimore's paper challenges the idea that early MMSA projects were uncritically multicultural, and instead suggests that the Museum played a complex role in memorialising the migration experiences of South Australians in ways that went beyond 'enrichment', 'journeys' and 'barriers'. This extensive and rich body of curators' writings gift those interested in museums with an insight into the theories, ideas and practical limitations that have shaped the exhibition of migration history.

The literature that links the scholarly practice of history with its representation in museums more explicitly is largely within the domain of public history. This field has blossomed in Australia since the 1980s, growing from an examination of broader social

[70] Walsh, Ibid, p. 87.
[71] Christine Finnimore, "Grief, Protest and Public History: The Memorial Wall in the Migration Museum, Adelaide," paper presented to the Museums Australia National Conference, 'Exploring Dynamics, Cities, Cultural Spaces, Communities,' Brisbane, 14-17 May 2006, http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/30569/20070213-0000/www.museumsaustralia.org.au/whatwedof161.html.

history trends, including the popularity of family history and movements to preserve natural and urban landscapes and sites.[72] The authors of these works tend to be historians whose own careers have spanned museums, libraries and universities, such as Tom Griffiths, Graeme Davison and Margaret Anderson.[73] While these publications do not analyse individual museum exhibitions in great detail, they do place museums within the broader scope of Australian social and cultural history – as sites of national celebration, as custodians of memory, and as places where national histories are actively made and remade.

Along with Griffiths and Davison, Anderson was a member of the Monash University group who developed the first Masters of Public History program in the 1980s. She had come from a role as the first director of the MMSA in Adelaide, where she oversaw the development of the opening permanent galleries and began the community consultation work that would characterise that museum's approach to migration history and shape the work of future institutions. Like Davison, Anderson has written on the construction of 'heritage', in particular the hazards of the historic house movement which can encourage "heritage myth making" and obscure the experiences of women.[74] Anderson's contribution to *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, a special edition of *Australian Historical Studies* in 1991, asked how social history and feminism would fare in new museums such as the Powerhouse, where the corporate sponsorship of galleries promoted safe, romantic and androcentric histories of technological progress at the expense of critical historical themes.[75] While not writing on the MMSA itself, Anderson has made reference to its historical significance in a number of publications, noting its role as a pioneer in the practice of negotiating

[72] Tom Griffiths, "Social History and Deep Time," *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2000, 27.
[73] See Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, vii.
[74] Margaret Anderson, "In search of women's public history: Heritage and gender," *Public History Review*, vol. 2, 1993, 1-18; see also Margaret Anderson *Material culture and the cultural environment: Objects and places*, Australia: State of the Environment Technical Paper Series, Canberra: Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories, 1997: http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/1996/publications/technical/objplace.html.
[75] Margaret Anderson, "Selling the Past: History in Museums in the 1990s," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 97, 1991, 135.

community histories, and in representing the historical experiences of women.[76] However, she has also drawn attention to the difficulties faced by its curators, who in "negotiating" histories with communities, necessarily have to make compromises, such as excluding internal community conflicts from their presentation of history.[77]

Anderson's writings in particular provide a broader context for my analysis of exhibitions of migration history, especially her gargantuan three volume study of collections in Australian museums and her recent chapter in *Understanding Museums*, which gives a valuable overview of the exhibition of social history in Australian museums.[78] As Anderson has observed, historians of museums in Australia tend to focus on national museums as those that carry the "burden of national identity", overshadowing the important contributions of state history museums and exhibitions, and the controversies that have taken place within them, throughout the previous thirty years.[79]

During those three decades, countless people encountered migration history while visiting Australian museums – many more than would have read a book on the topic. Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton have shown the extent to which museums, and other popular forms of history such as family history, historical films and novels, can shape people's understandings of the past. Their research project, *Australians and the Past*, found that "the most important medium identified for connecting with the past was objects", with most respondents associating the tangibility of objects with evidence of past events.[80] As a result, most Australians trust museums, even more than history

[76] See Margaret Anderson and Andrew Reeves, "Museums and the Nation in Australia," in Flora E.S. Kaplan, *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity*, London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1994, pp. 79-124. See also Anderson, "The Changing Museum."
[77] Anderson, "The Changing Museum", p. 308.
[78] Anderson was the chief author of the three reports of the Heritage Collections Working Group of the Cultural Ministers' Council between 1991 and 1993. These were summarised in a final report, Australia, Cultural Ministers' Council and the Heritage Collections Working Group, *Heritage collections in Australia: a plan for a new partnership*, Canberra: The Council, 1993. See also Margaret Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory 1970 – 2008".
[79] See Margaret Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory: 1970 – 2008."
[80] Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, *History at the Crossroads: Australians and the Past*, Sydney: Halstead Press, 2007, p. 78.

teachers, to provide factual or reliable information about the past.[81] Knowing how objects are selected, interpreted and displayed in exhibitions about migration is thus essential to understanding how social memories of migration have been shaped by museums.

Other Australian historians have addressed the significance of museums and the material culture they hold in shaping the historical consciousness of groups, communities, and even nations. Grace Karskens draws our attention to the use of objects in museums and in particular to the sometimes uneasy relationships between designers, curators, archaeologists and historians.[82] Historians have been reluctant to use material culture as evidence in their written work, and curators can become frustrated by the costs of maintaining large collections of mostly unlovely artefacts that archaeologists assure them are invaluable. In Karskens' own historical research, documenting the lives of working people in the Rocks in early Sydney, archaeological evidence opened new windows onto human experience and challenged myths about the character and ambitions of 'slum-dwellers'.[83] However, in museums, the selection of aesthetically pleasing objects by curators or designers can separate those objects from their original historical and archaeological contexts. In a number of exhibitions about the Rocks, Karskens found that objects were ironically used to illustrate "the very concepts or model they actually subvert".[84]

Chris Healy, who co-edited the comparative volume *South Pacific Museums* with Andrea Witcomb, notes that the practice of museum collecting shapes social memory, and as such, "the museum is the key public institution in which... processes of memory work have taken place in Australia".[85] In considering what sort of migrant memory

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[81] With the important exception of Indigenous Australians, who Ashton and Hamilton found had "little faith in museums." Ibid, p. 79.
[82] Grace Karskens, "Engaging Artefacts: Urban Archaeology, Museums and the Origins of Sydney," *Humanities Research*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2002, 36-56.
[83] See Grace Karskens, *The Rocks: life in early Sydney*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1997, and *Inside the Rocks: archaeology of a neighbourhood*, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1999.
[84] Karskens, "Engaging Artefacts," 48.
[85] Chris Healy, "Histories and collecting: Museums, objects and memories," in Kate Darian Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Melbourne: Oxford University

Australians have, we must then consider the selection of objects in migration history exhibitions. As Healy reminds us:

> ...the association between an object and social memory is an effect of a situation; that is, an object is always a product of the institution that has reorganised it according to certain rules.[86]

The rules by which objects are selected depend on the institutional culture of the particular museum, and its social and historical context. For instance, when curators at the MMSA began working with migrant communities to document their histories, they often had to convince people that their family heirlooms were important to the national story. For post-war European migrants, museums were places where valuable, rare and ancient objects were revered, not ordinary people's belongings. The objects that were displayed in the opening exhibitions of the MMSA in 1986 were not necessarily 'representative' of South Australia's migration history, but reflected the values and beliefs of the Museum's curators and the members of the public who collaborated with them.

While some recent innovative migration history projects have been analysed and documented online, the socio-historical context for migration exhibitions is generally sorely lacking in the secondary literature.[87] Neither is there much is published work that details what was actually in the migration exhibitions of the 1980s and 1990s. As already outlined, the existing literature on migration history exhibitions is fragmentary and lacks primary research. Some clues can be gleaned from publications detailing particular collections, such as the one produced by Glen Cook and Jerzy Zubrzycki at

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Press, 1994, p. 36. See also Chris Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 1997.

[86] Healy, "Histories and collecting," p. 36.

[87] The Migration Heritage Centre NSW excels at documenting how they go about their work. See Janis Wilton "Belongings: Oral History, Objects and an Online Exhibition," *Public History Review*, vol. 16, 2009, 1-19; Stephen Thompson, "Objects through time: creating and interpreting an online virtual collection," paper presented to the Museums Australia National Conference, Melbourne, September 2010, http://www.ma2010.com.au/docs/ma2010_thompson1.pdf; John Petersen, "Though This be Madness: Heritage Methods for Working in Culturally Diverse Communities," *Public History Review*, vol. 17, 2010, 34-51.

the NMA in 1992, or from general museum guidebooks and exhibition catalogues.[88] The most substantial historical work has been on the development of particular collections and institutions, rather than on individual exhibitions. These valuable histories provide an understanding of the context in which museums were developed, and how they changed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber's history of the Powerhouse Museum, *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, is a fine example), yet they are by their very nature overviews and have little space for individual exhibitions.[89]

The meanings constructed through objects and labels in individual exhibitions may be micro-histories, but because of the perceived authority of museums in society, and their position as 'official' disseminators of knowledge, they can also become highly contested. Graeme Davison has reflected on this in a number of publications following his role as an historical advisor to the NMA in the years before and immediately after its 2001 opening.[90] In a chapter for the collection of essays, *The Historian's Conscience*, Davison offered a useful way for understanding the relationship between museums and governments. He proposed three models for how museums engage with their publics – the "authorised version", where the story to be told is dictated by the government and imposed on the public; an "institutional consensus" where the museum's council together with museum staff decide on exhibition topics; and "civic pluralism" where the museum becomes a forum in the truest sense of the word – a space where different historical interpretations from teams of curators can be displayed. He wrote:

> While the first two models implicitly treat visitors as children, unable to think

[88] Cook and Zubrzycki, *Migrant Heritage: A Guide to the Collections*, 1992; A useful record of the NMA's opening galleries and exhibitions is *Land, Nation, People: Stories from the National Museum of Australia,* Canberra, ACT: National Museum of Australia Press, 2004.

[89] Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber (eds), *Yesterday's Tomorrows: The Powerhouse Museum and its precursors 1880 – 2005*, Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing and UNSW Press, 2005. Another excellent example is Carolyn Rasmussen, *A museum for the people: a history of Museum Victoria and its predecessors, 1854 – 2000*, Carlton, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2001.

[90] See Graeme Davison, "Museums and the burden of nation identity," *Public History Review*, vol. 10, 2002, 8-20; "What Should a National Museum Do? Learning from the World." in Marilyn Lake (editor), *Memory, Monuments and Museums: the past in the present,* pp. 91–109; "A Historian in the Museum: The Ethics of Public History," in Stuart Macintyre (editor), *The Historian's Conscience: Australian historians on the ethics of history*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004, pp. 49-63.

> for themselves, the pluralist model invites visitors to share the excitement and tension of thinking about the nation's past and future for themselves.[91]

This description echoes the words of historian Kay Daniels, who wrote vividly in 1991 about the ability of museums to "create intellectual interest from the tensions they generate and manifest."[92] But Davison felt the second model of institutional consensus best characterised the work of state-sponsored museums in Australia. In this version, all stakeholders must be consulted, and as a result, exhibitions can appear "bland and boring" and staff initiative is "fettered". Davison's preferred model was the pluralist approach, one where the museum's director can maintain a "degree of independence" and in doing so maintain a truly diverse program of exhibitions.[93]

Another way of understanding the relationship between the knowledge created in museums and their audiences was offered by Szekeres in an article nine years earlier in 1995.[94] Szekeres identifies three frames through which cultural diversity is popularly constructed and understood – the first is a conservative model which is concerned with maintaining the status quo, positioning migrants as lucky recipients of Australian generosity and demanding their speedy assimilation. The second frame is a "liberal position" that emphasises inclusivity and equality, valuing cultural difference yet erasing conflicts and struggles in the process. The third perspective is a "radical perspective", one that may provoke the question "in whose interest is migration?" This position would reveal who is privileged or disadvantaged by migration policies, and how these attitudes are manifested in society. These three models broadly fit with Davison's three types of museum operations – there is an extreme mono-cultural or mythical conservative position, a middle ground that partly calms the critical voice whilst acknowledging difference; and finally an ideal position where historical inquiry can operate in its most sophisticated form. Importantly, as Szekeres notes, these frames are not fixed, and can operate in a spectrum "from conservative through to

[91] Davison, "A Historian in the Museum," p. 57.
[92] Kay Daniels, "Exhibition Review," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 97, April 1991, 222. Daniels was reviewing the Australian War Memorial's exhibitions.
[93] Ibid, pp. 56-57.
[94] Szekeres, "A place for all of us."

radical".[95]

Davison, Szekeres and McShane all offer frameworks though which to view museum exhibitions, and to detect tropes of narrative and metaphor, political constraints on curatorial freedom and the political bias which may inform curatorial perspective. Szekeres calls for all curators, as "cultural workers", to "own their bias", while Davison sees curators as "public intellectuals" whose authorship should be open to scrutiny.[96] Each model has emerged from the historian's own experience of museum work at different times and in different political conditions. While all three have proven valuable to this thesis, they function better as windows onto the authors' own curatorial or historical practice than as conceptual frames that can be applied to other exhibitions. Szekeres' spectrum idea has the most applicability, as it is only through the social and political context of the particular museum at a particular time that an exhibition can be historically understood and analysed.

I argue that we can understand museum exhibitions about migration in Australia between the mid 1980s and 2001 as operating within two very broad and internally variable phases. The first phase (1986-1995) is characterised by a radical, revisionist and unashamedly multicultural challenge to standard national narratives; the second (1996-2001) by a more conservative and inclusive approach that, in an attempt to include all Australians in the migration story, dulls and distances itself from political controversy.

Of course, these phases need to be contextualised, not only within the changing social and political climate, but also in relation to the concurrent scholarship on migration history. McShane's claim that migration history in Australian museums has "clung to successful formulae in the face of changing political, historiographical and museological circumstances" can be tested by locating key exhibitions within a broader milieu of academic interest in migration.[97] Did museum exhibitions of migration

[95] Ibid, pp. 62-63.
[96] Ibid, p. 63; Davison, "A historian in the museum," p. 60.
[97] McShane, "Challenging or conventional?," p. 123.

history reflect the scholarship of Australian historians? Or were curators, as Szekeres suggests, forced to conduct their own research because of a "dearth" of secondary sources?[98] Historian Eric Richards, writing on the untapped potential of historical sources on nineteenth century Australian immigration in 1989, supported Szekeres' lament. Despite the relevance of the topic to not only national, but international migration history, Richards concluded that "there exists no continuous analytical narrative" of Australian immigration.[99] He contrasted this with the "much more developed and better financed literature on American immigration", such as Oscar Handlin's 1951 book *The Uprooted*, which opened with the lines "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history".[100]

While Australia lacked this 'grand narrative' history of immigration, there were a number of works published on immigration sporadically before the 1980s.[101] The earliest of these was James Francis Hogan's 1888 publication *The Irish in Australia*, which outlined the success of the Irish in the new land in order to demonstrate "what Irish communities are capable of when living under free representative institutions".[102] In listing the contributions of the Irish "race" to Australia, Hogan spun an immigrant success-story much like those that would later be written by historians of other

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[98] Szekeres, "Museums and multiculturalism."

[99] Eric Richards, "Annals of the Australian Immigrants," in Eric Richards, Richard Reid and David Fitzpatrick (eds), *Visible immigrants: neglected sources for the history of Australian immigration*, Canberra, ACT: Australian National University, 1990, p. 7.

[100] Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951, p. 3. Handlin's work combined a narrative approach to migration history which drew on literary sources (such as immigrants writings), as well as sociological methods, in order to tell the story of the peopling of America between 1820 and 1920. See David J. Rothman, "The Uprooted: Thirty Years On", *Reviews in American History*, vol. 10, no. 3, September 1982, 311-319. Other important early histories of immigration to America include Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), and Charlotte Erikson, *Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America*, London: The Trinity Press, 1972.

[101] Barry York's survey of the Australian National Library's pre-1945 holdings found approximately 700 books, booklets and pamphlets dealing with aspects of the settlement experiences of 43 groups. See Barry York, *Our multicultural heritage 1788 – 1945: an annotated guide to the collections of the National Library of Australia*, Canberra: National Library of Australia in association with the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1995.

[102] James Francis Hogan, *The Irish in Australia*, Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1888, v.

migrant communities.[103] Another racialist account, Jen Lyng's *Non-Britishers in Australia*, was published in 1935.[104] Lyng's book pursued an analysis of the Australian population by racial type, and claimed that 98 per cent of Australians were of "white racial stock", made up mostly of "Nordics", a smattering of "Alpines", and some temperamental "Mediterraneans". The remaining two per cent were a combination of "black", "yellow" and "brown" coloured peoples.[105] Economic historian Robert Madgwick's *Immigration into Eastern Australia 1788-1850* examined the phenomenon of assisted immigration which, along with the transportation of convicts, shaped the population of Australia in the nineteenth century.[106] Researched during the depression years and published in 1937, it set immigration to Australia within the proud story of British colonization. The 1940s and 1950s saw a lull in publications on the subject, although as previously noted there was a resurgence of interest in the 1960s through the sociological work of Charles Price, W.D. Borrie and others at the Australian National University, who were concerned with the marginalisation of ethnic minorities. By the 1970s they and others had begun a fledging field which would become known as "ethnic history", or the histories of non-British Australians.[107] This field, also known as multicultural studies, has been the subject of a number of historiographical surveys, including Barry York's 1996 survey of ethno-historical publishing and Hsu-Ming Teo's 2006 overview of ethnic historiography, which will be discussed shortly.[108]

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[103] Another example of this genre is Patrick Scott Cleary, *Australia's Debt to the Irish Nation Builders*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933.

[104] Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on population and progress*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press in association with Oxford University Press, 1935.

[105] See Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia*, p. 5.

[106] Robert B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia 1788-1851*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1937.

[107] See Charles A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962; Charles A. Price (editor), *Greeks in Australia*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975; D. Conomos, *History of the Greek Community in Queensland to 1939,* no publisher given, Brisbane, 1975; Gillian Bottomley, *After the Odyssey: A Study of Greek Australians*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1979; C.Y.Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975; C.F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia 1901 – 1921*, Richmond: Raphael Arts, 1977, all cited in Hsu-Ming Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories: an overview of ethnic historiography" in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003, p. 142-157.

[108] Barry York, *Ethno-historical studies in a multicultural Australia*, Canberra: Centre for Immigration & Multicultural Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1996. Hsu-Ming Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories: an overview of ethnic historiography."

Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh's 1977 book *The Immigrants* was different in approach.[109] This early publication in the field of migration history was unique because the authors set about creating a record of the experiences of working people who had migrated to Australia, one that could be told in their own words. With an oral history methodology and an emphasis on class, rather than on ethnicity or time of arrival, they hoped to avoid the 'contributory' mode of ethnic history and to redress the existing written accounts of migrant experiences, which were mainly of middle class migrants. Eighteen people, who migrated between 1890 and 1970 from a range of different countries (including Palestine, Greece, England and China), were interviewed. The resulting book chronicles the experiences of each migrant in their own chapter, prefaced with an introduction which gives a solid account of Australian immigration history from a class and gender-based perspective. The vignette approach and narrative style have much in common with migration exhibitions, as does the idea that there is a universal immigrant experience – as the authors wrote, "the little Jewish boy who went to Surry Hills school in 1890 faced exactly the same sort of problems as the little Turkish boy does today in Collingwood".[110] Historian Glenda Sluga has since noted that it was *The Immigrants* that first gave "significant public exposure" to the political actions of migrants in the post-war period, such as the riots at Bonegilla Reception Centre.[111]

In both the existing historiographies, it is the sixteen books of Michael Cigler's Australian Ethnic Heritage Series published between 1983 and 1988 that are identified as the major turning point in the field of Australian ethnic history. Teo draws our attention to the conceptual limitations of these early potted histories, which were mainly accounts of the process by which members of a particular ethnic group came to Australia, how the communities formed and settled in particular areas, what industries they worked in, how their rituals and traditions were celebrated, and how the groups experienced assimilation and racism.[112] As Teo notes, this schema fitted awkwardly

[109] Wendy Lowenstein and Morag Loh, *The Immigrants*, Melbourne: Hyland House Publishing, 1977.
[110] Ibid, vii.
[111] Glenda Sluga, "Bonegilla and Migrant Dreaming" in Darian-Smith and Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, p. 209.
[112] Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories," p. 146.

with some of the 'ethnic' groups in the Cigler series – for instance, the Americans – a group as diverse as the Australians, are hardly 'ethnic' by any definition.[113]

The limits of ethnicity as a lens for exploring migration history were recognised in Adelaide as early as 1982, when a working party appointed to report on the suitability of an 'Ethnic Museum' in Adelaide responded that such a model would be "fraught with problems" and "fragmentative". They proposed a "display programme developed around the interlocking themes of migration and settlement" as an "exciting alternative" to the proposed displays representing different ethnic groups.[114] As a result, the MMSA's opening exhibitions traced a history of migration to South Australia. Here we can see the same conceptual problems being encountered concurrently in museums and the historiography, which suggests that rather than following what was being written elsewhere, curators and historians were working within similar intellectual traditions and responding to the same social and political contexts and questions.

James Jupp's 1988 book, *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins* drew on the work of many of the Cigler series historians, among others, rigorously tracing the ethnic and geographic origins of the Australian population.[115] Categorised into groups, the diversity of Australia's peoples was a national achievement for the bicentenary year, proof that Australia, like the United States, was a 'nation of immigrants'. The book also became an invaluable reference for future historians and curators. Other historical works in the 1980s articulated Australia's multicultural present through an account of post-war migration policies, such as Jock Collins' *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-War Immigration* (1988) and Janis Wilton and Richard Bosworth's *Old Worlds and New*

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[113] Other groups were the Afghans, Baltic peoples, Cornish, Czechs, Dutch, Hungarians, Italians, Jews, Lebanese, Maltese, Poles, Scandinavians, Scottish and the Spanish. Ibid, p. 145.

[114] History Trust of South Australia and the Ethnic Museum Working Party, *Ethnic Museum Working Party report*, Adelaide: History Trust of South Australia, 1982, p. 12. These events are discussed in Chapter 2.

[115] James Jupp (editor), *The Australian people: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1988.

Australia: The post-war migrant experience (1984).[116] The former is an economic analysis that aims to clarify misconceptions about the apparent costs or benefits of migration, while the latter grew out of an extensive oral history project with post-war migrants and sought to overturn complacent assimilationist assumptions.[117]

It was not until the 1990s, according to Teo, that "more richly detailed works particularly on Greek, Italian and Chinese-Australian histories" appeared, although the scope of most ethnic history was still limited to "social history produced through traditional methodologies".[118] Postmodern areas of inquiry such as "identity construction, discourses of power, and the politics of resistance and cultural transformation" were rarely addressed. Teo paints a picture of a fossilised field. While cultural history and feminism stretched historical studies in new directions, ethnic history remained theoretically weak, tending to assume the "fact of primordial ethnicity" and to exaggerate the importance of particular groups in an effort to establish their contributions to the dominant culture.[119]

Teo's critique built upon Barry York's 1996 publication *Ethno-historical studies in a multicultural Australia*. York identified three progressive objectives of the "multicultural approach to Australian history", the first being to collate information and tell the stories of an ethnically defined group (the "contributory" approach, similar to McShane's enrichment narrative); the second was to relate those experiences to the wider story of the Australian nation, and the third and most progressive objective was "to better understand Australia's position in the world through the study of diverse societies from whence immigrants came".[120] York observed that most ethnic histories only managed to achieve the first objective, while perhaps touching on the other two. Teo linked York's critique to Hage's theory of Australian multiculturalism and cultural enrichment, and then used it to make a case for cultural history as a way to expand

[116] Jock Collins, *Migrant hands in a distant land: Australia's postwar immigration*, Leichardt, NSW: Pluto Press, 1988. Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia*.
[117] Wilton was a consultant to the Oral Histories Project of the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW between 1981 and 1983.
[118] Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories," pp. 146-147.
[119] Ibid, pp. 147- 148.
[120] Barry York, quoted in Teo, p. 144.

ethnic history, through the study of "ethnicisation". For instance, Teo argued that ethnic history should be concerned with whiteness because of its symbolic power in post-colonial nations.[121] While the concept of whiteness may not have been part of histories of particular ethnic groups, or even exhibitions of particular ethnic groups, the construction of "whiteness" has certainly been a feature of migration exhibitions, especially those that investigated the White Australia Policy and its legacies.[122]

Issues of identity construction were also a part of some of the first works on the "migrant experience". In Lowenstein and Loh's *The Immigrants*, one participant reflected:

> I call myself a half-Aussie. I don't feel I'm really Australian. I'm international. I'm not a Chinese in the true sense. At least, I'm Chinese originally, that's all. I really hate nations because they divide up people, human kind, in this world. Shouldn't have nations, shouldn't have races. The more they mix up the better people are.[123]

A number of limitations that Teo recognised in Australian ethnic history had previously been raised by other historians, and are relevant to my discussion of migration exhibitions. Her assertion that ethnic history has failed to seriously engage with Aboriginal history, especially around issues of dispossession and the ongoing process of colonialism, has been examined by Ann Curthoys in relation to white historical narratives of victimhood, and the "uncomfortable conversation" between multicultural and Indigenous histories in Australian history generally.[124] Australian migration exhibitions have also been limited in this way (by their very nature as sites where immigrant experiences are told), yet an engagement with colonisation and dispossession has been present in permanent migration exhibitions since 1986. They were some of the first government-funded spaces where white settlement was named an "invasion", and at the MMSA in 1986, the disappearance of the Kaurna people on

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[121] Ibid, p. 151.
[122] One exhibition that used the concept of "whiteness" to explore Australian identity was *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788*, at the NMA in 2001. It is analysed in Chapter 7.
[123] Lowenstein and Loh, *The Immigrants*, p. 79.
[124] Ann Curthoys, "Expulsion, exodus and exile in white Australian historical mythology," *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 61, 1999, 1-19; and "An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and The Indigenous" in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, Colour and Identity in Australian and New Zealand*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000, pp. 21-36.

the Adelaide plains was described as "genocide". The ways in which curators have struggled with the tension between the multicultural and the Indigenous, and the extent to which Indigenous Australians have been involved in these exhibitions, is one theme that I track throughout the two phases of migration history exhibitions.

Teo also draws our attention to the marginalisation of ethnic cultures in "mainstream Australian history" until the late 1990s, suggesting that "historians didn't quite know how or where to fit them in".[125] Glenda Sluga made a similar observation after researching her book about Bonegilla, a migrant reception camp in Victoria that operated from 1947 until 1971:

> In writing about Bonegilla I was particularly interested in the contrast between its ongoing life in the migration memories of a whole range of immigrants to Australia, even those who had never been there, and its marginality, if not invisibility, in surveys of Australian history.[126]

Yet the memories and experiences of migrant hostels such as Bonegilla, Pennington, Villawood and Westbridge were exhibited at many Australian museums throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and many associated objects form part of state and national historical collections. While the stories may be peripheral in 'grand narrative' Australian histories, they were visible and tangible in museum exhibitions at the MMSA, the PHM, and the ANMM. Indeed, when the MMSA finally removed its original 1986 migrant hostel display in 2000, visitors continued to ask where it was.[127] These exhibitions have not been linked in any scholarly literature. It is only through a history of exhibitions approach that we find that migration experiences have been a part of public histories in Australia for decades.

Historian Sara Wills has built on Sluga's work on migrant hostels as sites of memory (or forgetting), noting that "in the last decade there have been signs that hostel accommodation has begun to loom larger in the national consciousness".[128] Yet like

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[125] Teo, p. 143.
[126] Glenda Sluga, "Whose History?'" in Stuart Macintyre, *The Historian's Conscience*, p. 129.
[127] See Chapter 2, pp. 104-105.
[128] Sara Wills, "Between the hostel and the detention centre," in William Logan and Keir Reeves, (eds), *Places of pain and shame: Dealing with 'difficult heritage'*, London & New York: Routledge, 2009, pp.

Sluga and Teo she identified problems in the representation of migrant memories in public sites such as detention centres, where experiences of pain and shame do not fit inside the story of Australia as a successful migrant nation. Over a series of chapters and essays between 2001 and 2009, Wills explored issues of migration and memory in Australian history, arguing that the failure of historians to come to terms with the inherent loss involved in all migrations has resulted in the promulgation of the story of the good or benevolent nation, one with a proud history of providing refuge to migrants, whose own recent arrivals are quickly forgotten.[129] Instead, she proposed historians pay more attention to the "fact of migrancy" that underlies notions of 'Australian-ness' – an approach which could foster more empathy for contemporary refugee arrivals.[130]

Like Witcomb, Goodnow, Teo and McShane, Wills' critique of migration histories drew on Hage's critique of multiculturalism and connected the inclusion of migrant stories to the idea of a contributory history:

> Migration history in Australia has largely contributed to this [nation-building] project, with migrant stories included for their 'contribution' to national history... allowing a positive rendering of a progressive, and ultimately multicultural state where 'many' have come together 'as one'. In this formulation, the various racisms of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 get washed away by the tide of (white) multiculturalism...[131]

The problem here is that there is no middle ground – Wills suggests that by working within the paradigm of national history, historians are unable to assess the myth of nation or even be critical of national policies and practices. When politicians fuelled hysteria about refugee arrivals in late 2001 to promote a conservative agenda, Wills found that "the mnemonic role of histories *not* constructed around pride and nationhood were largely unavailable".[132] However, as this thesis shows, migration exhibitions were telling uncomfortable stories long before 2001, including migrant

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263-280. Wills was referring to the development of the Bonigella Migrant Reception and Training Centre into a cultural heritage site, called The Bonigella Migrant Experience.

[129] See Wills, "Between the hostel and the detention centre," p. 267.

[130] Sara Wills, "Finding Room for Loss," *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2001, 75.

[131] Wills, "Between the hostel and the detention centre," p. 267.

[132] Ibid.

memories of pain and shame, torture and survival, belonging and isolation. This rich history of migration exhibitions in Australian museums has not been as obvious to historians as the more readily available published works on migration, or the more quotable politicians' remarks on politically 'hot' issues such as refugees.

As a historian of post-war migration interested in public memory, Wills knows that museum exhibitions are important manifestations of national history which can shape public consciousness. With this in mind, she has asked why migration museums exist "not as core components of Australian history", but as "a separate set of observations, an institutionally divided migrant or multicultural margin".[133] It is an important question. Why did the MMSA open in Adelaide in 1986, and how did Museum Victoria come to exhibit migration separately at the IMM in 1998? Why has Sydney never had a migration museum, and how have the ANMM and the PHM filled that gap? And how did migration fare as a core component of the Australian story at the NMA in 2001? To better understand how migration stories have been told in Australian museums, we must also trace the history of the museums they inhabit. We need to see individual exhibitions as part of their own particular museum cultures, as part of the history of Australian museums, and as part of the broader historiography of migration in Australia. That is what this thesis aims to do.

Method

People generally write about the exhibitions they have seen. They describe what they heard, saw and felt - what struck them as surprising or curious, and what was familiar and known. By contrast I have not seen the majority of the exhibitions I write about in this thesis. Most no longer exist. This physical absence has shaped my approach to the research.

My ambition was to reconstruct past exhibitions in as much detail as possible. But so many questions needed answering – how big were the spaces? What text was on the labels? How were the exhibitions advertised? Who came? Who did not? McShane's

[133] Wills, "Finding Room for Loss," 77.

warning that the permanent archival record of past exhibitions was "fragmentary or difficult to access" proved true in some cases.[134] Museums have long paper trails relating to the objects they hold in their collections, but information on how those objects have been exhibited is more haphazardly organised, especially in the pre-digital age of the 1980s and early 1990s. Ultimately, the diligent record-keeping habits of museum staff have ensured that an archival footprint of most of these exhibitions remains, and can be made available on request.[135] I supplemented the archival record with a series of interviews with museum curators, directors and gallery managers, and found that by combining these sources I was able to recover a rich picture of past exhibitions, as they were during development, and on display.

The types of sources that I used to 're-imagine' exhibitions included design briefs, floor plans, object lists, photographs, visitor books, education kits, annual reports and exhibition catalogues. I hunted for copies of the final text and graphics for exhibitions, as well as visitor research and evaluations, exhibition reviews, and curators' conference papers. Newspaper articles (sometimes clipped out and archived by museum staff) provided a contemporary perspective, although the nitty-gritty of exhibitions is not often mentioned. Usually it is the flurry surrounding the opening of a new museum, or a controversy sparked by a complaint, that provokes journalistic interest. While many exhibitions have been dismantled, in most instances the physical spaces still remain, and I have stood in them and seen or imagined what they held. At the IMM in Melbourne, three galleries are almost the same as when they opened in 1998. At the MMSA in Adelaide some parts of the original 1986 exhibits still exist (such as the White Australia Walk), although their surroundings have been completely reworked. Amazingly, the PHM contains exhibitions largely unchanged since their opening in 1988. Museums can be time capsules, as Tom Griffiths has delighted in describing them. They tell us as much about their own histories as the ones they exhibit.[136]

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[134] McShane, "Challenging or Conventional," p. 122.

[135] At the ANMM, the NMA and the PHM I accessed exhibition files through records departments and archivists. Curators made available gallery working files at the MMSA and the Immigration Museum.

Pivotal to my analysis of these records and spaces has been the recollections of those involved in their creation. The ten interviews I carried out with curators, museum directors and gallery managers were, to borrow Alec Bolton's words, a "quest for better and more personal explanations of why and how things happened".[137] Of course, in choosing my questions, and allowing the interviewee to answer them at length (and sometimes with a high degree of divergence), what emerged was more than just a clarification of events. As the oral historian Alessandro Portelli wrote:

> The first thing that makes oral history different, therefore, is that it tells us less about events than about their meaning... how people tell their story has its own importance. The organization of the narrative reveals a great deal of the speakers' relationships to their history.[138]

The narratives were shaped in part by my interview structure. Each interview followed a similar path of questions, starting with how the person came to work at the museum, what their work involved and what the challenges of that work were. I then asked about specific exhibitions, and what influenced their decisions to display certain stories. Asking about a curator's favourite exhibition often brought out the qualities in an exhibition that made it 'work', and identified what the public responded to best. In most interviews I asked for a response to two critiques of exhibitions of migration – the stock narratives and metaphors identified by McShane, and the call from Sarah Wills for migration museums to explore experiences of loss. Interview outlines were emailed to the interviewee in advance as often my questions concerned events ten or even twenty years ago. This also gave participants a chance to gather any relevant documents, and to reflect on the changes in their practice over an extended period of time. There was a pleasing historical symmetry to the interview process, as oral history has been such an important part of migration history research and was a method with which all my participants were familiar. The stories they chose to tell me, and the explanations offered in response to my questions, were as much a guide to what areas they felt I should concentrate on as they were a source of information.

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[136] Griffiths, "Social History and Deep Time," 35.

[137] Alec Bolton, *Interviewing for oral history at the National Library of Australia: A short guide,* Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1994, p. 11.

[138] Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd Edition, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 36.

Through the combination of oral history and archival sources it was possible to track the life of each exhibition, from first conception, through to its dismantling. It occurs to me now that this life cycle mirrors the writing process, beginning with a bout of initial ideas and brainstorming, then creating from them an unruly and over-ambitious draft, and finally extracting a coherent, engaging and multi-layered story. Much gets left out along the way. Exhibitions can sometimes be critiqued for their apparent simplicity. And yet this is their very aim - to distil complex histories into a simple format that can be accessible to a wide range of people. It is why exploring the *development stages* of an exhibition, as well as its final appearance, is crucial to our understandings of how this type of public history is constructed, delivered and understood. Knowing what was left out, and why, is just as important as knowing what was included.

Telling stories

I have called this thesis 'Whose stories are we telling?' because it tracks whose stories have been told in museum exhibitions about migration. The 'who' is important, because it tells us who the subject of the story is – who has been identified as migrants, and who has not. So here I must explain how I chose the subjects of my story (the focus exhibitions), and how I set their scene.

When I started this project I was interested in how Australian history had been represented as a story of arrivals - the 'nation of immigrants' narrative - and sought out museums and individual exhibitions that demonstrated this approach. I limited my scope by choosing only major exhibitions that addressed a cross-cultural history of immigration to Australia, rather than those that displayed the migration histories and cultural heritage of particular ethnic groups, communities, or of particular types of migrants (such as child migrants or refugees). In some cases, such as the MMSA in Adelaide and the IMM in Melbourne, the whole museum required analysis. In other cases, only a single permanent gallery or temporary exhibition was relevant, such as *Passengers* (1991) or *Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788-1998* (1998) at the ANMM. Selecting only these exhibitions made the task of in-depth

analysis and comparison possible. A larger sample of disparate exhibitions relating to migration would be an interesting project, but would have made it impossible to recover individual exhibitions in all their colour and complexity. However, during my interviews and research other exhibitions that did not meet my initial selection criteria became increasingly prominent. Often a number of curators across different states would mention the same exhibition as being particularly influential – this was the case with the 1992 Museum Victoria exhibition *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton*. In a few cases I chose to include exhibitions that dealt not only with the history of immigration, but with broader related themes of cultural diversity or cultural survival. These deviations from the initial selection criteria served to better contextualise other exhibitions that shared common objects or themes. An example of this was the 1988 temporary exhibition *Survival* at the NMA, which had similar themes to the *Australian Communities* gallery at the PHM in the same year, and exhibited objects from the same collection as later NMA exhibitions *Tolerance* (1995) and *Horizons* (2001).

The web of exhibitions and ideas I discovered parallels the complex and overlapping nature of work in museums more generally. Each of the varied activities of a museum inform one another – from research to exhibition design, education to outreach, community consultation, oral history and collecting. The careers of museum curators link institutions, facilitating the exchange of ideas and sharing of knowledge. It soon became clear that within this fluid and complex culture of museums, it was inadequate to analyse an exhibition in isolation from what came before or after it, or even from the other projects that were occurring during its development. So rather than pursuing an artificial analysis categorised only by type or chronology, I chose to group exhibitions together based on their common institutional or historical context. The result is a more nuanced representation of the ideas and events that shaped key exhibitions of immigration history, both within and between institutions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Outline

The story of migration exhibitions in Australia has its origins in the social history revolution of the 1970s, the introduction of multiculturalism as a public policy and the history-making activities of community groups across Australia. In Chapter 1 I map these intertwining histories to demonstrate how 'migrant heritage' first came to be recognised as an important subject for museums. I introduce key players in the new museums of the 1980s and reveal how they helped shape the philosophies and collecting practices of their institutions. The NMA, the PHM and the MMSA are the subjects of this chapter, as they were the first to acquire the material culture of migrants for their collections. Each museum had a different relationship to multicultural policy and ethnic communities, which I argue shaped their response to migration history. What they had in common was the adoption of a national narrative of migration as an alternative to previous mono-cultural or nation-building 'white male' narratives. They began to invent the 'nation of immigrants' in order to integrate minority cultures into mainstream Australian history. The chapter ends with a case study, *The Changing Faces of Sydney*, which was exhibited at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1984.

In Chapter 2 I build on this institutional and social context with an in-depth analysis of the opening galleries of the MMSA, the world's first dedicated migration museum. The stories told in these first permanent exhibitions of migration history have been completely neglected in the existing literature. Here I explore them in the context of South Australia's sesquicentenary of British settlement - the 'Jubilee 150' that was designed to reconnect South Australians with their proud pioneer history. Seen against this background, the MMSA's opening exhibitions emerge as radical class and feminist-based reactions to previous conservative histories. The 'nation of immigrants' style of the chronological galleries was adopted as a way to challenge consensual narratives of peaceful settlement, revealing instead stories of invasion, genocide, poverty, discrimination, and ongoing cultural and ethnic diversity. Similar stories feature in Chapter 3, which examines three exhibitions in the context of Australia's Bicentenary – *Australian Communities* at the PHM, *Survival* at the NMA, and *The Great Australian*

Journey, the official travelling exhibition of the Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA). All had to confront the tension at the heart of the 'nation of immigrants' – the dispossession, invasion and colonisation of a country already owned. But their different institutional contexts led to three very different interpretations, two of which complicated the official celebratory version of the 'nation of immigrants' story promoted by the ABA.

These opening chapters illustrate the first of my findings – that we can see early migration exhibitions in Australian museums as a radical attempt to recast the past through the 'nation of immigrants' story. Chapter 4 occupies a transitional space between 'inventing the nation of immigrants' and later exhibitions, which I describe as 'democratising the nation of immigrants'. Here I track the shift in the official discourse of multiculturalism away from ethnicity and towards cultural diversity, and argue that this shift mirrors a change in the narrative of migration in museums, where the focus similarly shifted from representation of minority groups, to access and representation for "all Australians". This was also the period where the Federal Government began to support initiatives to record and conserve the tangible and intangible heritage of all Australians; however, financial constraints meant that these initiatives were implemented unevenly. The focus exhibitions in this chapter - *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton* at Museum Victoria and *Tolerance* the NMA - were both profoundly influenced by what came before, but also attempted to push 'beyond ethnicity' and to tell new stories.

The second part of the thesis considers exhibitions of migration history during the first two terms of the Howard Government. While this political context is essential to understanding how the exhibition of migration history changed, what also becomes clear is that each museum's own history (as set out in the earlier chapters), and the migration exhibitions displayed elsewhere, were the context against which new exhibitions were planned and executed. This is true of Australia's second migration museum, the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, which opened in 1998. Chapter 5 traces the history of this museum and reveals how negative attitudes to

multiculturalism and the perception of migrants as minorities informed the overt democratisation of the migration narrative in the opening exhibitions. The influence of America's immigration museum at Ellis Island in New York on Australian migration exhibitions of the late 1990s is a theme that links this chapter to the next. Chapters 6 is a tale of two exhibitions, each very different, but both a part of the second Olympic Arts Festival, 'A Sea Change'. Both were reactions to the politicisation of immigration in Australian political culture, particularly the appearance of Pauline Hanson and her divisive and briefly popular One Nation party. But while *Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788 – 1998* at the ANMM mimicked the style of Ellis Island's exhibitions and deliberately adopted a 'soft-sell' approach to migration history, *A Twist of Fate, an experience of war, pain, torture and survival: the stories of refugees who have settled in Australia* at the MMSA took a diametrically opposed approach. The 'success' or 'failure' of these two exhibitions demonstrates what type of migration history was palatable to an Australian audience in the late 1990s.

In Chapter 7, Australia's Centenary of Federation provides the backdrop for an assessment of the NMA's exhibition of migration history, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788*. While the 'nation of immigrants' had been a central narrative of the official Bicentennial celebrations in 1988, and Australia's cultural diversity was championed as a unique and attractive draw card for international eyes during the Sydney 2000 Olympics, the migration story was not germane to the official celebrations of the nation's 100th birthday in 2001. Instead, the achievements of a successful, cohesive and united Australia took centre stage. I argue that *Horizons* marked the end of an era for migration exhibitions in Australia, symbolising on one hand the failure of migration to act as an alternate national narrative, and on the other, the emergence of new ways to tell migration stories, through the conceptual frameworks of diaspora, identity, and place. While elements of these stories had featured in migration exhibitions over the previous two decades, they had been told within a national 'peopling' narrative. After 2001, migration history in Australian museums began increasingly to move beyond 'the nation', all the time building on the rich legacy of past exhibitions. The concluding chapter reiterates this legacy by

reflecting on why these stories matter.

My research into these exhibitions began out of a love for museums and an appreciation of the optimism inherent in their existence – the belief that by presenting history in accessible ways, it is possible to reflect, challenge and even change people's perceptions of their past and present. This thesis aspires to similar aims, and although the stories it tells are necessarily limited by the constraints of time and space, I hope that it encourages other historians to consider museum exhibitions, in all their fullness and complexity, as subjects worthy of our curiosity and attention.

PART ONE

RECASTING THE PAST,

INVENTING THE NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

1

Beginnings

On the 24th of August 1984, the newly restored Hyde Park Barracks was officially opened as Sydney's first museum of social history by the Premier of New South Wales, Neville Wran. The visitor numbers to the new museum were described as "phenomenal", with more than 115,000 people viewing the exhibits in its first five months of operation alone.[1] The Director of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS), Lindsay Sharp, reported proudly that the museum's social history exhibits appealed to all sections of the community:

> While younger school groups may leap into the hammocks and contemplate convict life as part of their colonial history syllabus, older students might study the history of the trade union movement illustrated by the magnificent trade union banners, now rescued from oblivion and decay. Senior citizens are responding enthusiastically to 'The Changing Faces of Sydney' where Repin's coffee shop in particular brings back happy memories and 'When the Country Comes to Town', a history of the Royal Easter Show. Many visitors have availed themselves of the computer facilities in 'Sydney at Your Fingertips' to identify the architectural style of their house or to learn the history of their suburb.[2]

But the exhibition called *The Changing Faces of Sydney* that Sharp referred to was not about Sydney's cafe culture, or just a piece of post-war nostalgia for the 'oldies'; it was the first exhibition of migration history in a major Australian museum. Through the stories of seven migrants, one of whom was Russian businessman Ivan Repin, it wove a history of Sydney as a city shaped by migration. The opening panel declared "every building, every street, the very naming of the city itself reflects its origins". [3]

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[1] MAAS, *Annual Report 1983/84*, Sydney: Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1984, p. 5. In comparison, for the whole year of 1984 Stage 1 of the Powerhouse attracted almost 280,000 visitors. At the end of the Hyde Park Barrack's first year of operation, its visitor numbers had almost equaled the Powerhouse, totaling 260,000. (MAAS, *Annual Report 1984/85*).

[2] Ibid.

[3] MAAS, "The Changing Faces of Sydney final exhibition text," The Mint & Barracks, 6 July 1984.

While past migrant arrivals were being celebrated as an integral part of Sydney's history at Hyde Park Barracks Museum (HPBM), contemporary immigration levels were a source of public anxiety. Respected historian Geoffrey Blainey ignited national controversy earlier that same year by drawing attention to the "unease about the increasing rate of Asian immigration", and suggesting that politicians and policy makers were out of touch with mainstream Australians – in his words, "multiculturalism is often what is good for other people".[4] Pinpointed by some as the beginning of the history wars in Australia, Blainey's Warranambool speech can also be seen as the first formidable attack on multiculturalism as a public policy and a national ideal.[5]

Why then did Australian museums begin to exhibit migration history in the mid-1980s? Was it simply in response to the concept of multiculturalism, introduced by the Whitlam Government in 1973, which for the first time positively acknowledged the cultural heritage of all Australians? This chapter weaves the histories of three new museums, the memories of individual curators, and a number of key federal and state government inquiries into museums and migrant settlement in the decade before 1984. The museums are the Migration and Settlement Museum (MMSA), established in Adelaide in 1982 and opened to the public in 1986; the MAAS, which oversaw the opening of HPBM and the development of the Powerhouse Museum (PHM) in Sydney in this period; and the National Museum of Australia (NMA), which was established in 1980. These museums were the first in Australia to begin acquiring the material culture of migration for their collections. However, as this account reveals, each museum had a different relation to multicultural policy and ethnic communities, which subsequently shaped their response to migration history. The interchangeability of terms like 'ethnic history', 'migration history', 'ethnic communities' and 'migrant communities' at this time reflected a shift in government multicultural policy from a focus on migrant settlement, to the idea of celebrating the ethnicities and cultures of all Australians. I argue that this shift created a tension between minority and mainstream that has

[4] "Blainey's speech still proves to be the fuel of much fiery debate," *The Warranambool Standard,* 20 September 2008.
[5] Richard Allsop, "Blainey outlasts the History Wars," *IPA Review* vol. 62, no. 1, March 2010, 7.

existed in migration history exhibitions ever since. The chapter concludes with an analysis of *The Changing Faces of Sydney*, the accidental vanguard of migration history exhibitions in Australia.

Museums in Australia, 1975

The catalyst for change in Australian museums was a report commissioned by the Whitlam Government in 1974 and chaired by the businessman Peter Pigott, *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections* (known as the Pigott Report). [6] Pigott and his committee travelled to museums all over the country, assessing the condition of the collections, their storage facilities, their content and their style of display. They also compared Australian museum practices to institutions overseas, and considered over 400 submissions.[7] The resulting report, delivered only days before the Whitlam Government was dismissed by Sir John Kerr in November 1975, is best known for its strident championing of a national museum of Australia in Canberra.[8] It outlined the proposed institution as "essentially a museum of man and the Australian environment" which would consist of three interlinked themes - the environment, Aboriginal history, and the history of Europeans in Australia. [9] By highlighting the lack of post-1788 history in Australian museums despite growing popular interest in the topic, the Pigott Report and its recommendations provided the impetus for future museum initiatives in Australian social history. As Stephen Foster points out, the report also recognised that "the federal government should play a leading role in the cultural life of the nation".[10]

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[6] Commonwealth Government and Peter Pigott (chair), *Museums in Australia 1975, Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975 , p. 1.

[7] Members of the committee visited museums in Canada, Denmark, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK and the USA. See Pigott, *Report*, pp. 53-55, 117.

[8] Recommendations also included the establishment of an Australian Museums Commission for better organisation and funding to the sector; the organisation of professional training courses in museum studies; and a new emphasis on the role of museums as sources of both informal and formal education. See Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien, "Museums in Australia: from a new era to a new century," in Griffin and Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums*, 2011, http://www.nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/DGriffin_LParoissien_2011a.html, and S.G. Foster, "Yesterday and Tomorrow at the National Museum of Australia," *borderlands e-journal* vol. 3, no. 3, 2004, http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no3_2004/foster_yesterday.htm.

[9] Pigott, *Museums in Australia 1975*, p. 71.

[10] Foster, "Yesterday and Tomorrow," para 11.

Historian Margaret Anderson has noted, however, that the recommendations made no mention of women's history, which at the time was an increasingly rich area at the cutting edge of Australian historiography.[11] Likewise, although the concept of multiculturalism had been introduced in Australia in 1973, the Pigott Report contained no specific reference to the varied cultural heritage of Australia's diverse peoples (with the exception of Aboriginal Australians), or of their different immigration histories.[12] At this early stage multiculturalism was primarily associated with a set of programs designed to improve the social and economic welfare of Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESBs) – it was seen as a policy for ethnic minorities, not 'mainstream' Australians. In the mid-1970s ethnic community organisations and government agencies such as the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council and SBS Radio were only just beginning to form.[13] This period also marked the first influx of large-scale non-European migration since the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century. These Indo-Chinese refugees from the war in Vietnam visibly manifested the end of Australia's racially discriminatory immigration policies.[14] The history of those policies, and by default the history of the peopling of Australia, was not yet part of any museum in the country.

At the time of the Pigott Report, Australia had eleven major museums, most of which dated from the nineteenth century and exhibited permanent displays of their

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[11] Margaret Anderson, "Selling the Past: History in Museums in the 1990s," 133.

[12] The first use of the word "multi-cultural" in an Australian policy document is A.J. Grassby and Australian Department of Immigration, *A multi-cultural society for the future: a paper prepared for the Cairnmillar Institute's symposium 'Strategy 2000 : Australia for tomorrow'*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973.

[13] Radio stations 2EA and 3EA began broadcasting in 8 languages in Sydney and Melbourne in 1975. Legislation brought the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) into being in January 1978, and it assumed control over the existing stations. Ethnic Communities Councils had been established in most states by the mid-1970s (NSW was the first in 1976, South Australia's council formed in 1980). On the development of ethnic radio and SBS see Franca Arena, "The ethnic media: issues and problems. A consumer's point of view" in Ian Burnley, Sol Encel and Grant McCall (eds), *Immigration and ethnicity in the 1980s,* Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985, pp. 95-99. For a brief account of ethnic affairs councils in Australia see Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia: The post-war migrant experience*, especially Chapter 9, "Immigrants and Australian Political Structures," pp. 171-184.

[14] See James Jupp, *Immigration*, Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1991, especially Chapter 7, "The End of White Australia," pp. 82-94.

predominantly scientific collections.[15] Among these was the MAAS in Sydney, which was established in 1879. Curator and historian Margaret Betteridge remembers securing her first graduate job there in 1973 in the decorative arts section - a very small section comprising of just herself and an archaeologist, Ann Bickford:

> That institution was fairly moribund at the time I joined it. There were very few professional tertiary qualified staff who had specific knowledge of collection areas, they were mostly people who'd started in the museum as technical assistants and just worked their way up.[16]

Despite the disappointing start, Betteridge decided a career in museums was her calling, and travelled to England to complete a postgraduate course in Museum Studies, as, at that time, such courses were unavailable in Australia. Her experience was echoed by the Pigott Report, which urged the introduction of post-graduate courses, apprenticeships and special training programs to increase skills and specialisation in the museum workforce.[17] On her return to Australia, Betteridge was seconded to Elizabeth Bay House to oversee its restoration. Then, after successfully managing a year of public programs to celebrate the centenary of the MAAS in 1979, she managed the conversion of the historic Mint building and the Hyde Park Barracks in Macquarie Street, Sydney, into museums. These opened in 1982 and 1984 respectively, while the MAAS social history curators were concurrently working on the opening exhibitions for the PHM, which opened in stages with the final unveiling planned for Australia's Bicentenary in 1988.

Other young arts graduates found their way into state museums through their fledgling history departments in the 1970s.[18] Margaret Anderson joined the Western Australian Museum in 1976 as an assistant to the curator of history, David Hutchison, who was the first historian appointed by the museum. Anderson's first task was to

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[15] The Pigott Report identified 16 major museums, although five of these were art galleries. See Pigott, *Museums in Australia 1975*, Appendix III, Table 1. For an overview of the history of museums in Australia see Foster, "Yesterday and Tomorrow at the National Museum of Australia."

[16] Margaret Betteridge, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 15 April 2010, Sydney, Australia.

[17] Pigott, *Museums in Australia 1975*, p. 3.

[18] The Western Australian Museum appointed a curator of history in 1970, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery followed suit in 1973. See Margaret Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory, 1970-2008."

catalogue the museum's arms collection - a laborious job which involved hand writing hundreds of entries for a card index. However, Anderson's time was increasingly spent on the development of a suite of social history exhibitions for the Old Gaol Museum in Perth, so the arms collection remained uncatalogued. The WA Museum had exhibited the first generally historical displays at their Fremantle campus as early as 1970, although, as Anderson notes, these early ventures were hampered by the museum's historical collections, which were a haphazard amalgam of colonial and technological artefacts.[19] This was typical of national collections more broadly, as the Pigott report noted. Historical objects had made their way to Australia's state museums through processes of donation, either because they once belonged to prominent pioneer families, or because of associations with Australia's wartime history or technological advances.[20]

The appearance of the first history departments in Australian museums coincided with an academic turn towards social history as a new field of inquiry. Prompted by international movements, including the work of the Annales School in France and the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, Australian historians began to question the entrenched celebratory narratives of the 1950s which articulated national identity as personified by the bushman (typically white, male, and working class).[21] Australian historian Richard Waterhouse recalls that this 'new social history' was viewed with suspicion by many staff members of the History Department at the University of Sydney in the 1970s.[22] The use of statistics to create a historical demography of the past - a method pioneered by economic history and labour history - broke away from the reliance on manuscripts and primary written accounts. The potential for this approach to illuminate the experiences of those who left no written records was the inspiration for a new generation of Australian historians, many of

[19] Ibid.
[20] These included oddities such as a collection of dentistry equipment held by the WA Museum. Margaret Anderson, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 16 September 2009, Adelaide, Australia.
[21] Russel Ward's *The Australian legend*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958, is an example of the style of history challenged by this generation of historians.
[22] Richard Waterhouse, "Locating the New Social History: transnational historiography and Australian local history," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol.95, no.1, June 2009, 1.

whom Waterhouse remarks were politically aligned with the New Left.[23] New histories were written to better reflect the diversity of Australian society – rural and urban, female and male, poor and rich, black and white. Whether feminist, socialist, Marxist, environmentalist or dealing with race relations, what these historians had in common was the desire to show that ordinary people are the makers of history. One method adopted by the new social history was historical archeology, or the use of the material culture of the past as historical evidence. This was particularly important for museums. Margaret Anderson remembers that "there was a real interest in the movement of history from below" when she was working at the WA Museum in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Suddenly, ordinary objects were not only illustrative; they could also be potentially transformative and challenge previous ideas of the past.

Environmental and cultural historian Tom Griffiths reminds us that the social history movement was not restricted to academia or museums, and should instead be seen as "part of a general efflorescence of popular forms of history and heritage" demonstrated by the proliferation of historical societies, the opening of new museums, the increasing membership of the National Trust, and community efforts to preserve buildings and other historical sites in the 1960s and 1970s.[24] For Griffiths, these are all examples of a "growing public need for a visible, visitable, tangible, touchable past".[25] Migration history, especially within ethnic communities, emerged as part of this popular interest.

Local and community museums

The Pigott Report revealed that "the quickening public interest in Australia's recent history has not been satisfied by the older State museums".[26] Where the State museums failed to provide for the demand, private enterprises filled the gap. Sovereign Hill, an open air museum telling "Australia's fabulous gold rush history" opened in Ballarat, Victoria, in 1970, and in 1975 the historic theme park 'Old Sydney

[23] Ibid, 4.
[24] Griffiths, "Social History and Deep Time," 27.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Pigott, *Museums in Australia 1975*, p. 70.

Town' opened on New South Wales' central coast.[27] What these sites offered was immersion in a recreated colonial past, complete with historical actors, displays and demonstrations. As sites of nostalgic pioneer history they echoed the hundreds of local history museums across Australia, which Pigott had described as "one of the most unexpected and vigorous cultural movements in Australia this century".[28] These so-called 'folk museums' reflected the renewed interest in Australian history from the 1960s onwards. Pigott wrote of them:

> …in many Australian districts a brave raggle-taggle little museum can dominate tourism because of lack of serious competitors… They appeal to many tourists for whom history usually is an unexciting word and for whom national museums, being so large, are numbing.[29]

As well as attracting tourists and providing important foot traffic for local businesses, these museums were social hubs for the middle aged and elderly residents of the communities in which they were located. Ann-Marie Condé has shown how in the 1970s, when many rural communities were in decline, local museums became "a means of using the past to face the future more confidently".[30]

What kind of past shored up these communities against the inevitable changes of the future? Professional historians hired as consultants to the Pigott committee reported the "sameness" of many displays.[31] Ronald Gibbs, who assessed a number of local museums in South Australia, was disappointed that many did not draw attention to

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[27] Sovereign Hill website, 'About Us', http://www.sovereignhill.com.au/sovereign-hill/about-us/. Graeme Davison argues that Sovereign Hill exemplifies the "monumental sense of history". See Davison, "The Use and Abuse of Australian History," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 91, October 1988, 71-72. Old Sydney Town was opened by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on Australia Day in 1975. It closed in 2003. See Claire O'Rourke, "Farewell to Old Sydney Town," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 2003.

[28] Pigott, *Museums in Australia 1975*, p. 21.

[29] Ibid. Nicole McLennan's paper on the educator Eric Dunlop and his influence of Australia's folk museum movement argues that this surge in public interest in social history began even earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century. Dunlop's Museum of Education in Armidale, opened in 1946, was one of the first Australian museums to be built on the principles of folk museums overseas, in that it recreated period rooms and focused on the social history of everyday people. With such a long history, it is a wonder that the Pigott Report found these museums so "unexpected"! Nicole McLennan, "Eric Dunlop and the origins of Australia's folk museums," *reCollections*, vol. 1, no. 2, September 2006, 130-151.

[30] Anne-Marie Condé, "A 'vigorous cultural movement': The Pigott inquiry and country museums in Australia, 1975," *reCollections*, vol. 6, no. 2, October 2001, http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_6_no_2/papers/vigorous_cultural_movement.

[31] Ibid.

their distinct regional histories, and instead displayed ad hoc collections of old domestic objects such as the ubiquitous flat irons and butter churns. Most displays were organized by type, rather than theme, and as a result the more nuanced histories of different groups in the district, including ethnic and Indigenous groups, were marginal or invisible. Certainly, histories of early sectarian conflict or violence between Indigenous people and settlers were entirely absent (as indeed they were in state museums at the time). The overarching narrative in these local museums was, as Graeme Davison has outlined, a "triumphant history, of territory gained, settled and subdued", a pioneer history where memories of the good old days were triggered by the everyday and mundane.[32]

One of the South Australian museums visited by Gibbs was the Barossa Valley Historical Museum in Tanunda – a small town first settled by Prussian immigrants in 1842. Most residents were descended from these settlers, and they, along with others interested in the town's history, had formed a local historical society. The museum was a result of their work and opened in the early 1960s. It had much in common with the style and presentation of other local pioneer museums Gibbs visited, yet in this case, the pioneers' origins were located on a map of Germany, rather than Britain. Had he travelled a little further south Gibbs would have come to Lobethal, a town with similar Prussian roots and a historical museum housed in the grounds of a local church. Lobethal Museum has an intriguing history, one that links it directly to the type of museums now called community or "ethno-specific" museums. Jonas Vanagas, a Lithuanian refugee who arrived in Adelaide in 1949 and settled in Lobethal, was one of the local historians involved in developing the museum.[33] After the Lobethal Museum opened in 1961, Vanagas was approached by the Lithuanian community in Adelaide to develop a museum exhibiting their material culture. This museum, called the Lithuanian Museum, opened at Lithuanian House in Adelaide in 1967.[34]

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[32] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, pp. 200-201.
[33] Migration Museum, *From Many Places: the history and cultural traditions of South Australian people,* Kent Town, South Australia: Migration Museum (History Trust of S.A.) in association with Wakefield Press, 1995, p. 313.
[34] See the Adelaide Lithuanian Museum website, http://www.community.history.sa.gov.au/organisations/adelaide-lithuanian-museum.

In an insightful chapter on community and the uses of local history, Davison notes that "the first Australian local historians were both makers and chroniclers of their community's past" and that this pioneer generation was "prompted to record their memories and achievements for posterity".[35] This is equally true of Australia's post-war migrant communities. The museums established by these groups, of which the Lithuanian Museum in Adelaide was the earliest, were the work of ethnic organisations first established to help new arrivals adjust to life in Australia while maintaining their cultural heritage and traditions.[36] By 1977 there were almost 2000 ethnic organisations in Australia – with the largest numbers coming from communities formed by Displaced Persons (DPs) who arrived as refugees following the Second World War, as well as the Greeks.[37] Viv Szekeres, the director of the MMSA from 1987 until 2008, has observed that many DPs from the Baltic States waited in anticipation for the Soviet occupation to end, after which they could return home. In the meantime, their community organisations functioned to keep patriotism and nationalism alive. During the 1960s and 1970s rapid changes in migration source countries effectively "froze" the European immigrant communities in Australia. The result, as James Jupp has argued, was "the preservation of nostalgia for the homeland at a particular and increasingly distant time".[38] The openings of the Lithuanian Museum in 1967, the Latvian Museum in 1972 and the Estonian Museum later in the 1970s in Adelaide can be seen as part of a process whereby those communities inscribed the once-foreign territory with their own stories and memories – recognition that their long-awaited return and homecoming had now lapsed.[39] Like the local pioneer museums praised by Pigott, these community museums used the past to face the future more confidently.

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[35] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, p. 199.

[36] One example is the Latvian Association of South Australia, formed by recently arrived DPs along with some Latvians already living in Adelaide in 1948. The association's early work involved assisting new arrivals and working with government organisations to arrange accommodation and access to information. They also quickly established a literary group to collect and disseminate Latvian-language books, a sports club, two choirs, a relief society to assist Latvians in the DP camps of Germany, a theatre ensemble, Saturday School, folk dancing groups and an annual cultural festival. The community purchased a house in the suburb of Wayville in 1955, and an adjoining hall was by 1972 opened as a Latvian Museum. Migration Museum, *From Many Places*, pp. 294-295.

[37] Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, p. 28.

[38] Ibid, p. 24.

[39] A Ukrainian Museum also opened in Adelaide in the late 1970s to mark 30 years of settlement of Ukrainian DPs. See Szekeres, "Museums and Multiculturalism."

Throughout the 1980s other community museums and historical associations sprang up in cities and regional centres, including two Jewish museums, a Chinese Museum, and the Italian Historical Society in Melbourne. Szekeres argues that these community-initiated museums were a "direct consequence of a new public and community consciousness about the future identity of the nation" and came from "an increased confidence in belonging".[40] The new public consciousness was a shift from the expectation that migrants should shed their old-world ways and assimilate, to the realisation that such a process was harmful. Instead, the preservation of distinct cultural identities was recognised as both beneficial to migrant communities and the Australian nation as a whole. In effect it was an official approval of practices already occurring in migrant communities throughout Australia.[41]

Museums and multiculturalism

The concept of a multicultural Australia was first espoused by Whitlam, but it was Malcolm Fraser's Coalition Government that saw the expansion and implementation of its ideals.[42] In 1977 the government commissioned a Melbourne barrister, Frank Galbally, to assess the current policies relating to migrant settlement. Galbally already had experience in the area, having defended Italian migrants who were charged following the 1961 riots at the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre in Victoria.[43] His recommendations, known as the Galbally Report, were instrumental in defining multicultural policy in government institutions (including museums) for the next two decades.[44]

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera,* p. 28.

[42] See Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts, "Australian Multiculturalism: Its Rise and Demise," paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 29 September – 1 October 2003, http://pegsnet.pegs.vic.edu.au/studentdownloads/History/Students/VCE%20Australian/AOS%204/Australian%20Multiculturalism.pdf. See also Wilton and Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australia,* pp. 182-183.

[43] Andrew Jakubowicz et al, *Ethnicity, Class and Social Policy in Australia*, p. 73.

[44] Commonwealth Government and Frank Galbally (chair), *Migrant services and programs: report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, May 1978,* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978. See also McShane, "Challenging or Conventional," 124 and Szekeres, "Migration and Multiculturalism."

The recommendations of the report were wide-ranging, and included the establishment of an Institute of Multicultural Affairs and the expansion of the Special Broadcasting Service to all states. The Good Neighbour Councils, which had been established during the immediate post-war years to help promote the integration and assimilation of 'new Australians' into existing communities, were to be replaced by a network of community-based migrant resource centres.[45] Education and health services were to be expanded, with grants-in-aid schemes for the training of multi-lingual social workers. Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts have argued that the report "was the medium for transmitting multicultural thinking to policy practice".[46] That "multicultural thinking" had been consolidated in the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council report of the previous year, titled *Australia as a Multicultural Society*.[47] Drafted by the Council's Chairman, Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, it identified the three guiding principles of multiculturalism as social cohesion, recognition of cultural identity and the promotion of social equality. All of these were inherent in Galbally's recommendations for migrant settlement, especially in regards to the importance of language – both the preservation of "ethnic" or "community" languages as part of the maintenance of cultural identity, and the importance of English-language proficiency to allow migrants equal opportunity and access in all areas of life. Symbolically, the report was the first to be tabled in Parliament in languages other than English.[48]

The significance of the report for Australian museums lies in its call to support multiculturalism through community education. It stated:

> We perceive many benefits arising from a multicultural society. Already our nation has been enriched by the artistic, intellectual and other attributes of migrant cultures. It seems clear to us that if our society develops multiculturalism through the broad concept of community education it will gain much which has been lost to other nations. It will avoid the social dangers

[45] See Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950-1970*, Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Press, 2008, pp. 178-182.
[46] Galligan and Roberts, "Australian Multiculturalism: Its Rise and Demise," p. 7.
[47] Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, *Australia as a multicultural society: submission to the Australian Population and Immigration Council on the green paper, Immigration policies and Australia's population, August 1977*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977.
[48] Copies of the report were translated into Arabic, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese. Galbally, *Migrant services and programs*, front matter.

> inherent in any policy designed to repress cultural diversity and enforce assimilation.[49]

While the report cited schools as the main site for education programs, the growing role of museums as educational institutions positioned them as equally useful venues for the teaching of inter-cultural appreciation and tolerance.[50] State funding for initiatives such as Melbourne's Chinese Museum, which opened in 1985, and the MMSA in Adelaide which opened in 1986, can be linked to this aspiration to educate the wider Australian community about cultural diversity.[51] Both were tied to those state's sesquicentenaries, and were small parts of broader programs of cultural regeneration. However, what set the MMSA apart from the other community-based museums was its focus on not just one ethnic group, but on all peoples in South Australia and the policies under which they arrived and settled.

Galbally, Edwards and migrant heritage

The MMSA was the result of a combination of push factors – a long period of social reformist government that invested in the arts, the impending sesquicentenary of South Australia's European settlement, and an inquiry into the South Australian Museum in 1979. The need to document and preserve the State's multicultural heritage was convincingly voiced by the State's ethnic communities and the newly established South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission, and supported by federal government policy following the adoption of Galbally's recommendations. This perfect storm was preceded by a bold museum experiment – the Constitutional Museum, opened in 1978 – which provided a model for social history exhibitions and community involvement in Australian museums.

The Constitutional Museum was an initiative of the Don Dunstan State Labor Government, which between 1970 and 1979 fostered something of a social and

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[49] Ibid, p. 105, para 9.8

[50] The Museum Education Association of Australia held their first conference in 1975, and the Museum Education Association of NZ formed in 1981. The two organisations held a joint conference held in 1985. See Museum Education Associations of Australia and New Zealand, *Interpreting Cultural Diversity: Conference Proceedings 1985*, New Plymouth, NZ: MEANZ, 1986.

[51] Szekeres, "Museums and Multiculturalism."

cultural renaissance in South Australia. Margaret Anderson has written that the museum was an attempt at a "new form of historical museum", one without permanent collections.[52] Instead, the main exhibition was a computerized audio-visual tour through South Australia's political history, called *Bound for South Australia*.[53] Temporary exhibitions included *Votes for Women*, a comparison of the suffrage movements in South Australia and Great Britain, and *Land Rights Now*, a history of Aboriginal land rights "from before the European invasion up to the present" which presented interviews with six Aboriginal South Australians.[54] This exhibition was one of the first in a state museum to address contemporary political debates and link them to Australia's colonial history.[55] There were also contemporary resonances with South Australia's naturalised migrant communities. A display about the internment of South Australians of German origin during the First World War asked "How safe are the democratic rights of Australians of non-British descent?" Rather than present Australia's historical and contemporary diversity as a benign or positive fact, the displays were critically driven, noting how under certain circumstances, such as during times of war or economic depression, some groups are deemed less-Australian than others.[56] In the 'Speakers Corner' section of the museum, members from political groups and organisations were invited to mount their own displays. It was the first community space in any Australian museum, an initiative introduced by the Museum's director Peter Cahalan at a time when the idea of turning over museum space to the public was anathema to most curators and museum directors.[57] Members of the public were also invited to write responses to exhibitions on notes and pin them to public notice boards, thus creating a dialogue between the museum, political organisations, and individual visitors.[58] The museum was a success and enjoyed high visitor numbers

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[52] Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory."
[53] Mark Blencowe, "Education Programs at the Constitutional Museum of South Australia," in Museum Education Association of Australia, *Museums & education: what now, what next: proceedings of the Third Biennial Conference 22nd – 18th August 1981, Melbourne, Victoria*, Melbourne: The Association, 1981, pp. 38-43.
[54] Ibid, p. 39.
[55] Mark Blencowe, "The Constitutional Museum of South Australia and the Museum of Migration and Settlement: Political and Cultural Diversity,"' in Museum Education Associations of Australia and New Zealand, *Interpreting Cultural Diversity: Conference Proceedings 1985*, p. 46.
[56] The temporary display was called "Australians or Aliens?" Ibid pp. 46-47.
[57] See Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory."
[58] Blencowe, "Education Programs at the Constitutional Museum of South Australia," p. 39.

in its opening years – an indication that the public *was* interested in less-conventional historical themes and displays, and that the new social history could attract an audience.

As well as establishing the Constitutional Museum, Dunstan's Government purchased two struggling private museums and a number of historical buildings to retain their collections and heritage value for the State.[59] It also turned its attention to the South Australian Museum, which, like many other state museums in Australia, had suffered decades of under-resourcing. In response to the Pigott Report of 1975, which had brought these problems to light, Dunstan's Minister for Community Development John Bannon commissioned a report into the museum to be chaired by the anthropologist and arts administrator Robert Edwards. Edwards' *Final Report*, released in August 1981, included a raft of recommendations for the redevelopment of the South Australian Museum, but also concluded that the Museum was not able to take on the added responsibility of caring for and exhibiting post-settlement collections of the State's history. It advised that this function be better served by a network of social history museums governed by a new body, The History Trust of South Australia (which was consequently formed by making legislative changes to the existing Trust of the Constitutional Museum).[60] Peter Calahan, the director of the Constitutional Museum, was appointed as director of the History Trust. One of these new social history museums was to be an "ethnic museum".

It is important to note that the idea for an ethnic museum was not present in Edwards' *First Interim Report*, released in late 1979. This report does contain some reference to migrant needs, suggesting that the redeveloped South Australian Museum make available "rentacassette recorders" with guided tours of the main displays in both local community languages (Italian, Greek, German and Dutch) as well as Japanese (for

[59] Birdwood Mill Museum first opened in 1965 and was purchased by the South Australian Government in 1976. Pioneer Village opened in 1972 and was purchased in 1978. See Brian Samuels, "The History Trust of South Australia: An idea before its time?", paper presented to the History Trust of South Australia 12th State History Conference, 'History, Community and Environment,' Renmark Hotel, 24-25 May 2003, http://www.history.sa.gov.au/history/conference/BrianSamuels.pdf.
[60] Ibid.

foreign tourists).[61] The impending sesqicentenary celebrations of British settlement are noted in the report as the perfect opportunity to "capture the popular interest of the public in the State's history", and to "educate people in their past and the multi-racial origins of the State" – perhaps referring to Galbally's call for community education to strengthen multiculturalism.[62] Amongst a list of ideas for new displays to revitalise the ailing museum was a suggestion to address "the Barossa Valley and its settlement by German immigrants".[63] The only other reference to non-Anglo migrants in the report proposed their inclusion in the "community arts field" as part of a State Heritage Centre, an idea that never came to fruition. Space was to be made available for "ethnic groups to hold exhibitions of traditional costumes, folk art and other aspects of their attractive cultural backgrounds."[64]

It was only after the release of the *First Interim Report* that the idea of a separate museum for South Australia's ethnic communities was born. The *Final Report* of June 1981 suggests that the idea came from ethnic communities themselves. Two organisations are mentioned specifically - the Co-ordinating Italian Committee, which represented numerous Italian clubs and associations in the State, and the German Education Council. Both supported the idea of a separate ethnic museum, which would act as "the natural fulcrum around which all cultural activities and initiatives of the ethnic communities should revolve".[65] The idea was given added weight in the report by the recent formation of the South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission.[66]

The role of the proposed new ethnic museum also dovetailed perfectly with the recommendations of Galbally's 1978 Report, which was afforded much more attention in Edwards' 1981 *Final Report* than in the 1979 *First Interim Report*.[67] Three themes

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[61] Robert Edwards, *South Australian Museum study: first interim report, findings and recommendations*, Adelaide: South Australian Museum, 1979, pp. 38-39.
[62] Ibid, p. 16.
[63] Ibid, p. 36.
[64] Ibid, p. 22.
[65] Robert Edwards*, Museum policy and development in South Australia, Final Report,* Adelaide: Government Printer, 1981, p. 165.
[66] The South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980 was assented to on 13 November 1980 and commission began operating in June 1981.
[67] Edwards, *Final Report*, p. 164.

from the Galbally Report were emphasised by Edwards - community education, consultation and cultural heritage. The Ethnic Museum was to be an educational resource for both the public and the Government – a "permanent pool of updated information" on the State's ethnic communities.[68] It was to have a social role in promoting tolerance and understanding between groups. Lastly, an ethnic museum was seen as an important way to redress the failure of South Australia's cultural institutions to adequately research, preserve and display "migrant history" and "ethnic cultures".[69] Separate displays on the "Italian, Greek, German, Northern and Southern Slavic, Asian, Other Mediterranean cultures and Other European Cultures" would be both informative and preserve ethnic cultural items for future generations. [70] Thus two totally unrelated Commonwealth inquiries – Pigott and Galbally - became instrumental in the proposal for an ethnic museum.

From Ethnic Museum to Migration Museum

One of the first actions of the newly-formed History Trust was to appoint a working party to investigate the "specific needs and requirements for a South Australian Ethnic Museum".[71] The Working Party consisted of eight people, two women and six men, including two trustees of the History Trust, an officer of the South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission, a research officer at the Constitutional Museum, a high school teacher and a university lecturer. German, Italian, Polish, Anglo-Celtic and Latvian backgrounds were represented, and qualifications in the arts, history, and education were dominant along with law and architecture.[72] This group of people was responsible for the key decisions that would shape the museum.

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[68] Ibid, p. 165.
[69] Ibid, xiv.
[70] Ibid, p. 165.
[71] History Trust, *Ethnic Museum Working Party Report*, p. 1. The Working Party was established in September 1981.
[72] The members of the working party are listed as Maria Graboeska Baldino, LL.B, Chairperson, Trustee of the History Trust of S.A.; Ron Gibbs, B.A. (Hons.) Trustee of the History Trust of S.A.; Ian Harmstorf, M.A., Grad. Dip T., Senior Lecturer in History , South Australian College of Advanced Education; Alessandro Gardini, B.Sc., B.A., Adv. Dip Ed., Principal Projects Officer, S.A. Ethnic Affairs Commission; Suzanne Brugger, B.A. (Hons.), PhD., Research Officer, Constitutional Museum; Stefan Rohozinski, Dip. Build. Tech (Warsaw), Dip. Arch., Dip. T.P., Senior Lecturer Architecture, S.A.I.T; Geoff Speirs, B.A. (Hons.), Dip Ed., Museums Officer, History Trust of S.A; and V.R. Zembergs, B.A., Dip Ed., teacher with Campbelltown High school, Member of P.E.B. Subject Committee. History Trust, *Ethnic Museum Working Party Report*, p. 1.

Crucially, the group took issue with the proposed name of the museum, stating that "the Working Party considers that it is undesirable to retain the term 'ethnic', because it has been progressively devalued in recent years and now carries often distinctly pejorative overtones".[73] They preferred instead the name "Migration and Settlement Museum", as "it is a name which describes accurately both the subject matter with which the museum will be concerned and the dynamic approach which should be taken in its treatment".[74] By rejecting Edwards' model for an ethnic museum with separate displays on different groups, the Working Party took a deliberate step away from a fragmentary history, choosing instead to align the new museum with a broader history of migration and settlement to South Australia. Margaret Anderson, who was the first staff member appointed to the Ethnic Museum in 1982, felt the same way. From her point of view as an historian working in museums, it was the broad themes and trends across time and cultures that were important, rather than a collection of ethnicities which would, in her words, "perpetuate division rather than creating the notion of a society built up of lots and lots of groups".[75] The Working Party suggested possible permanent displays such as "major themes in the migration process, for instance reasons for leaving the old homeland, the experience of migration [and] the process of settlement" which were adapted by Anderson and her growing curatorial team in the years leading up to the Museum's 1986 opening. [76] The Migration and Settlement Museum, by virtue of the decision to expand and deepen the remit it was initially assigned, became the first dedicated migration museum in the world.

Although the Working Party moved away from a model of ethnic history as separate to mainstream South Australian history, the success of the new museum depended upon the support of South Australia's ethnic communities. The objectives of the original Ethnic Museum were still met by this model, albeit in a more sophisticated form. Rather than serving government as a pool of information, the Migration and Settlement Museum would be an "education centre interpreting the state's multicultural heritage". It would work with existing museums in ethnic communities by

[73] Ibid, p. 7.
[74] Ibid p. 8.
[75] Anderson, Interview.
[76] History Trust, *Ethnic Museum Working Party Report*, p. 1.

advising them on cataloguing, conservation and display techniques, and develop an oral history program within "ethnic and cultural communities" in the state.[77] In keeping with the recommendations of the Galbally Report, the Working Party Report emphasised consultation with ethnic communities with regards to their heritage. A survey distributed to over 300 ethnic organisations to gauge support for the concept of a Migration and Settlement Museum attracted only thirty-six written responses. Of these, almost all supported the proposed name, many voicing relief that the "ethnic" label would be avoided.[78] Only one respondent preferred the term "ethnic", and explained that this was because "If we don't call it 'ethnic', we will be squeezed out by the Anglo immigrants."[79] This comment suggests an attitude of the lesser of two evils - while many individuals saw the term "ethnic" as pejorative, it was an effective way to identify their communities, along with their unique needs and issues. The introduction of ethnic affairs commissions into state and federal politics in the same period, as the Edwards Report noted, aimed to create "an administrative environment for the future development of institutions which will effectively cater for the needs of all Australians".[80] At the first museum of migration, the tension between serving the needs of ethnic communities and integrating their migrations into a mainstream narrative of South Australian history reflected the very tension within the larger concept of multiculturalism. Was it for all Australians, or only for the 'ethnics'?

Zubrzycki and the National Museum of Australia

We can observe a similar underlying contradiction in the planning documents for the NMA in Canberra, which officially came into existence with the *Museum of Australia Act 1980.*[81] The Act was a direct result of the 1975 Pigott Report recommendations, and the Interim Council appointed to report on the location, establishment and development of the new museum broadly endorsed Pigott's tripartite-themed

[77] Ibid, p. 9.
[78] Ibid, pp. 35, 48.
[79] Unidentified respondent, quoted in History Trust, *Ethnic Museum Working Party Report*, Appendix V, p. 48.
[80] Edwards, *Final Report*, p. 164.
[81] For links to the relevant legislation see the National Museum of Australia website, http://www.nma.gov.au/about_us/ips/legislation.

model.[82] This is hardly surprising given that Peter Pigott himself, and Dr John Mulvaney, who was on the Pigott Inquiry committee, were both members of the Interim Council. Yet while the Pigott Report made no specific reference to the diverse cultural heritage of Australia's post-1788 population, other than to suggest that a national museum should include the history of "European man in Australia", the Interim Council's 1982 report, titled *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia*, was much more explicit. It asserted that Australia's "complex multicultural society" would be the focus for a future "mature national identity".[83] One of the Council members was Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, who at the time was chair of the Ethnic Affairs Task Force of the Australian Council of Population and Ethnic Affairs (ACPEA), as well as Foundation Professor of Sociology at the Australian National University. As we have seen, Zubrzycki played an influential role in defining Australian multiculturalism. It was this experience and knowledge in the history of Australian migration and migrant settlement issues that Zubrzycki brought to his role in the Interim Council for the NMA, where his specific responsibility was to articulate the objectives for the proposed *Gallery of Australia Since 1788.*[84]

While the 1981 Edwards Report into the South Australian Museum relied on the version of multiculturalism outlined in the 1978 Galbally Report (which was in turn based on the 1977 AEAC paper drafted by Zubrzycki), the 1982 Plan for the NMA resembles closely the policy discussion paper titled *Multiculturalism For All Australians*, again the work of Zubrzycki, this time in his role as Chair of the Ethnic Affairs Taskforce of the ACPEA.[85] The paper was launched in June 1982, just months before the plan for the NMA, which explains the striking similarity of phrases used to

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[82] For this early history of the NMA see James Gore, "Representations of History and Nation in museums in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand - The National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa," PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002, pp. 180-183. Gore explains that the original name, the Museum of Australia, was changed to the National Museum of Australia in 1985 to avoid confusion with the Australian Museum in Sydney.

[83] Museum of Australia, Interim Council, *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia*, Canberra: Museum of Australia, 1982, p. 2.

[84] See Jerzy Zubryzcki, "The place of ethnic heritage collections in the National Museum of Australia, Submission to the National Museum of Australia Review," 2003, http://www.nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2489/Prof_Zubrycki.pdf.

[85] Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs, *Multiculturalism for all Australians: our developing nationhood*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982.

describe Australia's diverse cultural heritage (many are identical). [86] What is important about the 1982 ACPEA paper is the new direction of Australian multiculturalism it espouses:

> *Multiculturalism For All Australians* makes a dramatic break with previous papers produced by AEAC and other advisory bodies… subtitled *Our Developing Nationhood*, the paper extends the concept of ethnicity to all Australians and shows that settlement, educational and other special programs that have been developed lately for the benefit of Australia's cultural minorities are only justified as a means to an end – the creation of a truly multicultural society embracing all Australians. On a broader view than that of special programs for migrants is the urgent need to sensitize our mainstream institutions to the changing nature of our society.[87]

In extending the concept of ethnicity to all Australians, the paper argued that ethnic affairs policies no longer referred only to NESB minority groups, but to the entire population. Multiculturalism was redefined as a "model for relations between all ethnic groups in Australia", and services specifically for cultural minority groups were only to be justified where they served to ensure equality of opportunity. It was an attempt to shift the public perception of cultural diversity away from the idea that multiculturalism is about minorities, and therefore of no relevance to 'real Australians', and towards the notion that cultural diversity is the national norm.

As a result, the description of the *Gallery of Australia Since 1788* included in the 1982 *Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia* was underpinned by the idea of Australia as a nation of immigrants. The plan for the display of the 'European Arrival and Settlement' theme began with a nineteenth century immigrant ship, which led into sub-themes such as the problems of adapting to the new environment and the establishment of agriculture.[88] Other subthemes in the adjacent 'Way of Life Galleries' would respond to the question "Who are we?", by addressing "ethnic make-up, the

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[86] For example, *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia,* states that "The Museum will emphasise that Australian society today comprises people of many different origins. Apart from Aboriginal Australians, the present population of Australia (over 98 per cent) are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants who have arrived in the past 200 years." (p. 40). This phrase is quoted directly from the May 1982 policy document *Multiculturalism for all Australians*, p. 1.

[87] Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, *National Consultations on Multiculturalism and Citizenship Report, October 1982*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982, p. 2.

[88] Museum of Australia, *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia*, p. 18.

Australian middle-class ethos, migration patterns, relations with northern neighbours, class and sexual division".[89] These plans suggest many different ideas and an attempt to marry the two themes of 'Environment' and 'Europeans in Australia'. However, the description of the *Gallery of Australia Since 1788* centered on the concept of cultural diversity:

> The Museum will highlight the effects of cultural diversity, beginning with the arrival of Pastor Kavel and his flock of German Lutherans in the 1830s, and continuing through the successive waves of Chinese gold diggers, Pacific Islanders, Italian cane cutters and fruit growers, and the late 19th century Greek pioneers of later migration chains from the islands of the Aegean, to the Jewish and East European refugees of the 1930s and 1940s, the wave of post-war immigration, the German, Dutch, Turkish, Lebanese settlers of the 1960s and early 1970s and, finally, the more recent immigrants from Indo-China.[90]

This overview is in effect a history of non-Anglo Celtic migration to Australia – listed chronologically are the 'others' usually excluded from the national story. Indeed, the proposed collections policy for the new museum included a commitment to "avoid overemphasizing a dominant or powerful culture at the expense of peripheral cultures".[91] Zubrzycki later remembered the central feature of this plan as a "clear commitment to the pluralistic view of Australian history".[92] The mature national identity that the museum hoped to foster was certainly a multicultural one, and the *Gallery of Australia Since 1788* was to highlight the cultural diversity of the population through time. However, that cultural diversity was seen as belonging to the non-Anglo-Celtic population. This was in contrast to the official version of multiculturalism, which, as we have seen, aimed to extend the idea of ethnicity to all Australians. To communicate cultural diversity as normative would require strong collections in the material culture of all immigrant peoples.

As historian James Gore and curator Ian McShane have both noted, the collection strengths and weaknesses of the NMA were determined in its first decade of existence. The appointment of Zubrzycki as a consultant to the development of an ethnic

[89] Ibid, p. 19.
[90] Ibid, p. 40.
[91] Ibid, p. 70.
[92] Zubrzycki, "Ethnic Heritage in a Multicultural Australia," p. 35.

heritage collection for the museum in 1986 ensured that the early visions for the *Gallery of Australia since 1788* would be pursued.[93] Naturally, Zubrzycki made use of his contacts in DP communities in Sydney and Melbourne to solicit donations, and as a result, the collection that he and his colleague, Dr Egon F Kunz (a former DP from Hungary), accumulated relates to their experiences. McShane notes that material relating to the Greek, Italian and Polish communities in the early twentieth century was also collected.[94] To publicize their collecting activities and to identify existing collections, Zubrzycki and Kunz embarked upon a survey of existing ethnic heritage items held by individuals and organisations across the country, and conducted oral history interviews with donors to record the provenance of objects.[95] So although Zubrzycki's public policy papers emphasised the concept of ethnicity as one applying to all Australians, and the acquisitions policy for the NMA similarly stated that "the Museum will avoid the fragmented approach of dealing with distinct ethnic groups in Australian history as separate and exclusive entities," certain strengths and weaknesses in the collection emerged. [96]

NMA exhibitions from 1988, 1995 and 2001 examined in the later chapters of this thesis all made use of the pioneering collecting work of Zubrzycki and Kunz. However, curators also grappled with gaps in the collection. For McShane, an Australian museum that had nothing to document the Irish experience in Australia – "we are talking a quarter of all Australian heritage there" – posed an ideological and historical problem.[97] It propagated the idea that ethnicity was something only belonging to NESB migrants, thus denying the unique cultural identities and migration histories of other migrant groups such as the Irish and English, both of which, in terms of population, were far more significant. His essay on the history of the national collection argues that museum-making in the social history area simply followed the contours of public policy - that is multiculturalism - and, as a result, migration history in museums was

[93] Museum of Australia, *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia,* p. 69.
[94] Ian McShane, "Museology and public policy: Rereading the development of the National Museum of Australia's collection," *reCollections*, vol. 2, no. 2, September 2007, 206.
[95] See Cook and Zubrzycki, *Migrant Heritage, A Guide to the Collections*, p. 8.
[96] Museum of Australia, *The Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia,* p. 69.
[97] Ian McShane, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 16 November 2010, Melbourne, Australia.

conceptually limited to a narrative of increasing cultural diversity.[98] McShane extrapolated this argument to include all Australian museums, but it fits best with the predicament of the NMA, which had the closest relationship of any Australian museum to government policies of multiculturalism.

The irony is that these important gaps in the collection were recognised and documented publicly years before McShane wrote of them. In a guide to the migrant heritage collections, published in 1992, Zubrzycki and his colleague Glen Cook (who previously worked at the MMSA) warned:

> Of the objects catalogued to date, the most significant gap in the collection which purports to reflect the migrant experience in Australia concerns items documenting the largest, and historically the most significant, source of immigration to Australia, namely, the British Isles; only the small collections (McLean and Ewers) contain relevant material. As with the paucity of Asian heritage material, a wide range of items of material culture and documents will need to be assembled to do justice to the convicts and free settlers from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland who have, for a variety of reasons, made their home in Australia since 1788.[99]

Were the museum in a more stable financial and organisational situation, these warnings may have been heeded, and gaps in the collection rectified. However, continual uncertainty as to the future of the NMA stymied curatorial attempts to grow the collection systematically, and material remained reflective not of the migration heritage of all Australians, but of the priorities of the pioneers of the field in the late 1980s.

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences: new museums and social history

Like the NMA and the South Australian Museum, the MAAS was planning a whole new suite of exhibitions in the early 1980s. Following the announcement in late 1978 that the Museum would finally find new premises in the redeveloped Ultimo Powerhouse site (after almost a century at its increasingly crowded and rundown building on Harris Street next to Sydney Technical College), a revitalization of the museum staff began in

[98] McShane, "Museology and public policy," 205-206.
[99] Cook and Zubrzycki, *Migrant Heritage, A Guide to the Collections,* p. 14.

earnest under the direction of the young and newly-appointed director, Lindsay Sharp.[100]

The sense of renewal and enthusiasm was infectious. When announcing further details of the project in February 1980, NSW Premier Neville Wran declared the new museum would be "one of the finest and most exciting of its kind in the world". [101] Later that year, the MAAS took over responsibility for two historic buildings in the centre of Sydney- the Mint and Hyde Park Barracks. Suddenly, recently hired curators found themselves working on multiple projects – preparing for the opening of Stage 1, the first part of the PHM project, in 1981, as well as the opening of The Mint Museum in 1982 and then HPBM in 1984. Work towards the full opening of the PHM in 1988 was also underway.

At HPBM the ideas for the exhibitions emerged from research that was carried out into the history of the building, including a major archeological investigation of the site. Betteridge, who was charged with the oversight of the exhibitions, recalls:

> We knew that it had been built as a convict depot; we knew it had had a use as an immigration barracks; we knew that it had served as courtrooms. And as the research evolved we learnt more and more about the functions of the building that had been carried out and the sorts of people that were associated with those activities. I think that informed our thinking [that] the building has a role in explaining something about the history of Sydney, because at that time there was no museum, no exhibition, no, nothing about the actual history of Sydney.[102]

The idea to pursue a historical interpretation of the building, highlighting different aspects of Sydney's past, took hold. Because of the history of the Barracks as a residence for male convicts, and later for female immigrants sent to Sydney as domestic workers, a social history perspective was chosen and social historian Peter Spearritt was engaged as an advisor. During a series of workshops, exhibitions were

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[100] For a detailed account of this period see Davison and Webber (eds), *Yesterdays Tomorrows*, especially the introduction, and Peter Spearritt's chapter, "Positioning: On site and in situ", pp. 240-253. Between 1978 and 1988 the staff of the museum grew from 43 to 430. (Ibid, p. 35).
[101] Neville Wran, quoted in Spearritt, Ibid, p. 245.
[102] Betteridge, Interview.

brainstormed that would, in Betteridge's words: "present a slice of Sydney's social history but without trying to be necessarily chronological… we wanted to cut across that and use topics that looked at aspects of what made Sydney the city it was through the people who lived in the city".[103] These exhibitions – *When the Country Comes to Town*, a history of the Royal Easter Show, *Sydney at your Fingertips*, an interactive database of house designs, and *The Changing Faces of Sydney*, an exhibition about migrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were installed on the middle floor. The top floor housed an exhibition about the building and its place in colonial Sydney, including an installation of hammocks as reminders of the convict dormitory it once housed. On the ground floor was an exhibition about the archeological excavation carried out on the site, as well as temporary exhibitions, the first of which was a display of historic trade union banners called *Badges of Labour, Banners of Pride*.[104]

By the time HPBM officially opened, the blueprint for the opening exhibitions of the Powerhouse had been developed and approved.[105] In their history of the PHM and its precursors, Graeme Davison and Kimberley Webber wrote that the decision to organize the exhibitions "thematically, rather than around traditional divisions between collections and curatorial specialisations", was one of Sharp's boldest.[106] Five interdisciplinary themes were planned. These were 'Creativity and Australian Achievement', an introductory gallery with examples of Australian creativity in the arts and sciences; 'Bringing People Together', a focus on transport and space exploration; 'Decorative Arts', which was to include a display on childhood and maternity; 'Science, Technology and Perception', a gallery with multiple interactive elements exploring technologies past, present and future; and 'Everyday Life in Australia', a social history of Australia's people which was to include segments on the 1930s, pub culture, post-

[103] Ibid.
[104] An accompanying book was published by the museum. Ann Stephen and Andrew Reeves, *Badges of labour, banners of pride: aspects of working class celebration*, Sydney, NSW: Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in association with George Allen & Unwin, 1985.
[105] Power House Museum, *The Power House: A museum for us all*, Ultimo, NSW: The Museum, 1985, p. 28.
[106] Davison and Webber (eds), *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, p. 36. Webber was one of the social history curators who worked on the opening exhibitions of the HPBM and the PHM.

war migrants and Aboriginal community history.[107] Even though the PHM was located in Sydney, it was to have a national outlook. The 1985 plan of the exhibitions described the questions which were to inform the 'Everyday life in Australia' theme: "The Australian community is one of the world's most ethnically diverse. Who are we all, where did we come from, how did we get here, was it what we expected?"[108]

The question "who are we?" had also framed the 'peopling of Australia' segment of the *Plan for the Development of the Museum of Australia* in 1982. In both exhibition plans, the search for a truly national, representative identity was articulated in terms of the diverse origins of its people. Their coming together as 'Australians' was the stuff of a burgeoning new nationalism independent from colonial origins. Like at the NMA, the PHM planned to use oral histories and personal objects to relate the experiences of migrants. Two images included in the 1985 PHM plan are emblematic of the Museum's growing collection of migration heritage. The first was a hand-embroidered cross-stitch on linen titled "The Emigrants Farewell and The Emigrants' Prayer", made by Maria Tilley in England in 1854 for her son in Australia. The piece was purchased by the Museum in 1984.[109] The second was a poster advertising migration to Australia, displayed in the UK in the late 1950s, proclaiming "Australia, Build your children's future!", and purchased by the Museum in 1985.[110] The juxtaposition of these two objects, spanning over a century of migration, clearly staked out migration history as an important theme for the future PHM. They were to be included in a display called *First Impressions*, which would later become *Australian Communities*.[111]

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[107] These descriptions are based on the plans outlined in the 1985 publication *The Power House*. They changed slightly over the next four years, and an additional theme, 'Recollections', was added. See Davison and Webber, Ibid, p. 36.
[108] PHM, *The Power House*, p. 10.
[109] Cross stitch sampler 'The Emigrants Farewell and The Emigrants' Prayer', 1854, PHM Collection, A11064, http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=172770.
[110] A poster advertising migration to Australia, 1955-1960, PHM, 85/824, http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=52927.
[111] This exhibition is analysed in Chapter 3.

Ethnic Affairs and the Powerhouse Museum

The relationship between multicultural policy and the exhibition of migration history was not as direct in NSW as it was in South Australia. In South Australia the decision to create an Ethnic Museum followed on closely from the formation of the State's Ethnic Affairs Commission (formed in 1980), and although access and equity were key concerns, the main ideas underpinning the new museum were the preservation of ethnic cultural heritage, and the collection of information relating to the State's ethnic communities. In NSW, Ethnic Affairs had a longer history. An Ethnic Affairs Council was first established under the Liberal Premier Tom Lewis in 1975, although it was under the Labor Government of Neville Wran (1976-1986) that Ethnic Affairs became a priority across all government departments.[112] In 1977 Wran commissioned a report into multiculturalism in NSW, and it was released in the following year under the title *Participation*.[113] It recommended the establishment of a permanent Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC), which would be the first in Australia. It was established under an Act of Parliament in 1979, under the chairmanship of Dr Paulo Totaro (the primary author of *Participation*). The NSW EAC, like those established subsequently in other states, provided funding to community organisations for welfare and cultural programs, coordinated an interpreting and translation service, and conducted research into the needs of ethnic communities in the areas of health, employment, education and legal issues.

Before the NSW EAC had built contacts with cultural organisations, they conducted their own cultural preservation work. An early initiative unique to NSW was the Oral Histories Projects, which occurred between 1981 and 1982. The Commission hired oral historian Janis Wilton as a consultant to interview twenty migrants who had come to

[112] Andrew Jakubowicz, "The Ethnic Affairs Commissions take shape," Making Multicultural Australia for the 21st Century, http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/library/media/Timeline-Commentary/id/113.State-government-initiatives, See also Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, "A Decade of Achievement in Ethnic Affairs", *ETHNOS*, no. 44, October 1985, 1-2.

[113] Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW and Paolo Totaro (Chair), *Participation: report to the Premier*, June 1978, Sydney, NSW: Government Printer, 1978.

Australia in 1951 (the project was initially called 'Thirty Years After').[114] Over sixty hours of interviews were recorded with migrants from a range of European backgrounds and lodged with the State Library of NSW. Some of the tapes were later used by curators at the PHM for a display on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.[115]

It was not until 1984 that the activities of the NSW EAC had a significant impact on the operation of the MAAS. In December that year Premier Wran announced the creation of a new Ministerial Portfolio of Ethnic Affairs, for which he would be responsible. The NSW EAC newsletter, *Ethnos*, reported that "one of the reasons for his assuming the extra ministerial portfolio is to signify his fullest personal support for the policy now being implemented to make 'mainstream' Departments more accessible to all individuals and groups in a multicultural society".[116] This policy of "mainstreaming" required all government departments and authorities to prepare Ethnic Affairs Policy Statements (EAPS) to identify barriers of equal access to NESB people, and to articulate goals for the eradication of those barriers. Annual reports to the Premier on progress were required.[117]

It was at this time, during the development of Stage II exhibitions for the Powerhouse, that the MAAS drafted its first EAPS. This process began in 1984 with the formation of a committee, called the Multicultural Liaison Officers Group, made up of existing staff from across the organisation. The group was formed "to commence planning and implementation of the policy recommendations in such areas as multilingual publications, acquisitions, labels and exhibition content". [118] The policies would be applied to Stage II exhibitions, as well as a review of existing venues, "to ensure that

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[114] Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, "Oral Histories Project (NSW), being interviews with Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds concerning the migrant experience, 1981-1982," Sound Recordings, MLOH18, State Library of NSW, see http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=411667.

[115] This was part of the *Australian Communities* exhibition, which is analysed in Chapter 3.

[116] Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, "New Ministerial Portfolio of Ethnic Affairs Announced," *ETHNOS*, January/February 1985, no. 38, 1.

[117] See Jakubowicz, "The Ethnic Affairs Commissions take shape."

[118] MAAS, *Annual Report 1984/85*, Sydney: Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1985, p. 30.

displays and associated material reflect the diversity and richness of our multicultural society".[119] By 1986 the committee had developed guidelines to incorporate multiculturalism into both the exhibitions and services of the museum, as well as making contact with a number of "community groups" and conducting seminars for staff on the issues of access and equity for ethnic minorities.[120] The Museum's EAPS was approved by the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission in June 1986, and as part of this process, a multilingual education officer was appointed to establish a multicultural program and continue networking with ethnic communities.[121] In some respects, multicultural policies of access and equity were instilled deeper into the institutional culture of the PHM than at the MMSA in Adelaide - which opened, surprisingly, without multilingual guides, guidebooks or audio tours.[122] However, the MMSA was a smaller and more modestly funded and staffed museum, where as the PHM was the major cultural initiative for the NSW Government for the Bicentenary.

The Changing Faces of Sydney

The multicultural infrastructure that developed at the MAAS occurred largely after the opening of HPBM, yet it was this satellite museum that offered for the first time an exhibition exploring the impact of immigration across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the time it opened, in August 1984, the MMSA in Adelaide was in the process of planning their opening exhibitions and working with ethnic communities in South Australia to document their stories and cultural heritage. The NMA had begun collecting objects for their *Australia Since 1788 Gallery*, but Zubrzycki had not yet become a consultant for the development of the ethnic heritage collection (he took up the role in 1986). Curators at the MAAS, after finishing the social history exhibitions for Hyde Park Barracks, had turned their attention to the goal of the Powerhouse Stage II exhibitions – to be unveiled in 1988. It is easy to see why *The Changing Faces of Sydney*

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[119] Ibid.

[120] MAAS, *Annual Report 1985/86*, Sydney: Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1986, p. 19.

[121] See Jana Vytrhlik, "Cultural Diversity: From an Experiment to Research Study," in Margaret Anderson, Ann Delroy and Deborah Tout-Smith (eds), *Identity, icons and artefacts: proceedings of the inaugural Museums Australia Conference*, Fremantle: Western Australian Museum, 1994, pp. 321-323; Anon, "Museum of Applied Arts and Science – Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement," *ETHNOS*, October 1986, no. 54, p. 8.

[122] Anderson, Interview.

has escaped notice in the literature on migration exhibitions, as it doesn't fit the mould of the more collaborative community exhibitions that are usually associated with migration history in museums. Also, when HPBM changed management from the MAAS to the Historic Houses Trust in 1990, the exhibition was dismantled. All that remains is a catalogue listing the objects and graphics that were on display. The following recreation draws on records kept by the MAAS including office files, meeting notes, graphics and object lists, as well as an interview conducted with Margaret Betteridge, who managed the opening of the Mint and Barracks Museums.

Betteridge remembers that the concept of an exhibition about immigrants "really derived as an idea from the connection between the Hyde Park Barracks and immigration rather than migration being an important element in social history". [123] But once the theme was chosen, exhibition records suggest that curators who worked on it used the topic as an opportunity to challenge commonly held assumptions about who is 'Australian' and who is a 'migrant'.[124] Breaking down these oppositional categories was key to the challenge. The working title during development was *People of Sydney,* and the first design brief states that the curators were "attempting to make Australians look at migrants from a different point of view and to realise that Australia has been a migrant country since 1788". The exhibition was to be both "educative" and "evoke a nostalgia for a period".[125]

Physically, the space was dominated by a reconstruction of a Repins Cafe. Repins cafes became Sydney establishments from the 1930s onwards, and were famous for pioneering the sale of coffee in Australia. Stirring visitor memories, the exhibition text read "many faithful patrons still claim that they have not tasted a decent cup of coffee since the last Repins closed in 1970".[126] The display worked by showing an element of the familiar and nostalgic, and then linking it to the less-well known story of Ivan Repin

[123] Betteridge, Interview. The Barracks had been an immigration depot for women in between 1848 and 1886.
[124] Among those who worked on the exhibition were Robbie Bartlett, Jennifer Sanders, and Kimberley Webber.
[125] Kimberley Webber, "People of Sydney Design Brief," MRS 328, Exhibition design files, 1984 –.
[126] MAAS, *The Changing faces of Sydney: the Hyde Park Barracks*, Sydney: Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, 1984.

and his family, who fled Soviet Russia via Shanghai and arrived in Australia in 1925 as refugees. A collection of tableware, uniforms and printed material from the Repins cafes was lent to the museum by the family.

Another prominent feature of the space was a timber surfboard suspended from the ceiling. The surfboard belonged to Walter Biddell, a member of the Bronte Surf Club who emigrated from Surrey in the late 1870s and became known for developing unorthodox surf life saving equipment. His display evoked nostalgia for summer days gone by, with images of early beach carnivals at Bondi and commentary on the changing dress and swimming regulations of the early 1900s. Two oil paintings from a similar period by Sydney artist Julian Ashton formed part of a display that documented his life and work. Ashton emigrated with his wife and son from England in 1878 on doctor's advice, due to chronic asthma. He founded the Julian Ashton Art School in 1890, and would have been a familiar name to many local visitors.

The only female subject in the exhibition was Julia Stewart, an impoverished gentlewoman of Scottish background who emigrated with her daughter from England in 1850. A substantial collection of Julia's effects had come to the Museum through the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1981. Betteridge recalled that "we ran with her as an example of someone who immigrated at the time when the Barracks was a female immigration depot, and there was sufficient documentation of her story to make her a character that brought that connection alive".[127] Extracts from Julia's diary formed part of an audio visual display that also included readings from the diary of Edward Hufton, about his fourteen week journey from England to Australia in 1879. Hufton and his family left unemployment in England and took advantage of an assisted immigration scheme to come to Australia in search of economic security. Numerous domestic and personal items from their life in Sydney were displayed, lent by their descendents.[128]

[127] Betteridge, Interview.
[128] MAAS, *The Changing faces of Sydney: the Hyde Park Barracks*.

One section featured only graphics. It was called 'Puglia in Sydney', and was about three Italian immigrants from the same town in Puglia, Molfetta who migrated between 1924 and 1953. Images of their passports, photos sent back to family in Italy, and one of Loveday Internment Camp in 1943, where Francesco Centrone was held during the war years, illustrated their story. This element of the exhibition generated interest from Sydney's Italian population – the Hyde Park Barracks visitor book contains a number of entries in Italian including one from the Mayor of Molfetta, Vincenzo de Cosmo, who visited with NSW Labor politician Franca Arena in June 1985. The entry expressed his thanks for the inclusion of Molfettese emigrants in the exhibition.[129] Other comments were also positive. Nicola Campo, a local councilor from Molfetta who visited the Museum in September 1988 gladly noted a "very strong interest in the history of immigration", and added "I have really appreciated the presence of a little part of my city in the museum".[130]

Visitors also encountered a Chinese tea shop recreation, furnished with nineteenth century panels and porcelain dishes from the Quong Tart Tea House. Quong Tart arrived in Australia as a child with his uncle, who was transporting Chinese labourers for the Braidwood goldfields in 1859. Quong Tart's remarkable story was a way for curators to introduce the theme of Chinese migration and immigration restriction. Like that of Ivan Repin, it was also a great migrant success story. Quong Tart married an Englishwoman, achieved a prominent position in Sydney society and operated a chain of tea shops and restaurants. The exhibition text noted that by the time he opened the Elite Dining Saloon in the Queen Victoria Market building in 1898, Quong Tart was a "Sydney legend".[131]

Together, these seven stories illustrated the post-transportation period of immigration to Sydney.[132] A planned section on the author of *Seven Little Australians*, Ethel Turner,

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[129] MAAS, Visitors book, MRS 248, Visitors books (Hyde Park Barracks), c1984 – 1989. Translated by Francesco Paradiso.
[130] Ibid.
[131] MAAS, "The Changing Faces of Sydney final exhibition text," The Mint & Barracks, 6 July 1984.
[132] Although convicts were acknowledged as the first migrants, the 1788-1840 period was already covered in the exhibition *Convict and Free*.

who emigrated from England with her sister and mother in 1879, never eventuated, perhaps due to a lack of objects. Betteridge remembers that the choice of stories was largely influenced by what material was available, although there was discussion among the exhibition team about the need to show a range of immigrant stories, and also an intention to find people who had "some sort of impact on the history and development of Sydney".[133] Quong Tart, Ivan Repin and Julian Ashton were all names that may have been familiar to Sydney-siders, as their businesses were named after them. Others, like the Hufton family and Julia Stewart, led modest working lives and were unknown. The Italian fishermen, an interesting addition showing the pattern of male-first migration typical of many Italian migrants, were similarly working class.

So what messages about migration history did the exhibition convey? The seven stories spanning a century of arrivals from 1850 to 1950, when seen together, represent a chronology of increasing diversity. The first four arrivals, in 1850, 1877, 1878 and 1879, were all from England. The next three, in 1859 (Quong Tart), 1924 (Ivan Repin), and between 1933 and 1953 (the three Italians), were from elsewhere. The implication here is that Australian society has become increasingly multicultural, from largely mono-cultural beginnings. However, the reasons Australia was a predominantly white British country until well into the twentieth century were not illuminated in any depth. There was no reference to policies of migrant settlement such as the shift from assimilation to multiculturalism, and although the White Australia Policy was mentioned in relation to Quong Tart's story, it was not explained. In this style of exhibition, the personal stories convey a narrative of enrichment. Through cuisine, art, modes of leisure and hard work, migrants contribute to the core culture without bringing any threatening or challenging political beliefs. Their acceptance promotes an impression of the "good nation", welcoming new arrivals and rewarding them for their efforts.[134] Crucially, the very reason for the inclusion of migrant stories - the role of the Barracks in housing female immigrants - was not

[133] Betteridge, Interview.

[134] For more discussion of Anglo-Australians' desire to see themselves as a "good nation" see Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: narratives of national identity*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen& Unwin, 2007, pp. 142-143.

explored. While Julia Stewart's story was meant to be representative, it did not touch on the experiences of thousands of 'unprotected women' who were housed in the Barracks and subject to Government surveillance and controls. Instead, the Barracks was presented as a male convict site. The division between 'convict history' and 'migration history' carried the perhaps unintended message that migrants only came willingly, further entrenching the idea of the good host nation.

A striking feature of the exhibition from a modern day standpoint is the brevity of the timeline – what of migrants who arrived in the thirty years since the 1950s? Betteridge couldn't recall why they were not included, but suggested that "up until that time I think people thought of migrants as being European migrants, rather than necessarily thinking too much about the shifting Australian connection to another part of the world [Asia]".[135] The other notable silence is Aboriginal history, which Betteridge says "wasn't even on our radar".[136] The absence of Aboriginal people in histories of towns and cities was typical of both local and state museums throughout this period. It was not until the Migration Museum opened in Adelaide in 1986 that Aboriginal history was eventually addressed as the vital context of Australia's immigration history.

The curators of *The Changing Faces of Sydney* had hoped to make visitors realise that "Australia has been a migrant country since 1788".[137] But the processes by which migrants came – as prisoners, settlers, refugees, indentured laborers, assisted immigrants, or as adventurers, and the policies which determined who came and when, were not central to the narrative. Broad features of Australia's immigration history were absent. *The Changing Faces of Sydney*, like the other social history exhibitions at HPBM, was predominantly about different impressions of Sydney through time. Importantly, it did show that existing collections could be used to tell the history of individual migrants, and that these personal journeys were a powerful narrative tool for visitors.

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[135] Betteridge, Interview.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Webber, "People of Sydney Design Brief," MRS 328.

A year after HPBM opened, an article in the *Daily Mirror* called "A Bonza Welcome for New Settlers" invited multi-lingual readers to volunteer at the Museum as guides. One such volunteer, Nick Bonza, a retired bus driver of Egyptian and Greek heritage, was quoted as saying "I am hoping to make new settlers understand Australia and love it like I do".[138] The initiative was part of the MAAS's commitment to equal access and opportunity, and was aimed at attracting more people of "ethnic background" to the Museum.[139] Despite the aims of the Museum and the exhibition, the article made no mention of *The Changing Faces of Sydney*, and instead gave the impression that "new settlers" needed to be educated in the city's history, rather than being an integral part of it. It appears that the challenge to assumptions that the MAAS curators wished to communicate was not a message that reached the media or perhaps many of the visitors. The contemporary relevance of this history of migration to Sydney, a city still being shaped by new arrivals, was obscured by more traditional ideas about museums as places of national history, and the Barracks as a site of Australia's convict beginnings.

Conclusion: New pioneers

The first exhibitions of migration history in Australia emerged in tandem with the introduction of multicultural policies in government institutions, but in order to understand the complexity of the interplay between the two, they need to be seen in a broader historical continuum. Folk and community museums played an important role in amassing collections and stories long before state museums became interested in social history. Many of these small museums made submissions to the Pigott Report of 1975 into national collections, and later to the 1979 Edwards Report into the South Australian Museum. Local "ethnic museums" are in this context better seen as pioneer museums, representing the collective memories of their communities.

The Pigott Report of 1975 played an important role in encouraging the collection and display of Australia's post-1788 history by the state museums. Likewise, the Galbally Report of 1978 drew the attention of museums through its declaration of the value of

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[138] Anon, "A Bonza Welcome for New Settlers", *Daily Mirror*, 19 November 1985, no page, in MRS 179, Newspaper cuttings, 1978 – 1989.
[139] See "Ethnic Affairs Policy" in MAAS, *Annual Report 1985-86*, p. 19.

migrant cultural heritage, and its call for community education as a means of disseminating multicultural principles. Together, they provided the necessary justification for the establishment of an Ethnic Museum in Adelaide. However, as this account has demonstrated, there was resistance from ethnic communities themselves who objected to the limited and piecemeal approach that the Edwards *Final Report* of 1981 proposed. The establishment of a Migration and Settlement Museum, rather than an Ethnic Museum, again highlights the difference between the simple adoption of policies of equity and access for ethnic communities, and the potentially more transformative view of museums as places where the cultural heritage of all Australians should be represented. Re-visioning South Australian history as a continual series of arrivals and settlings claimed for ethnic communities a place of equal importance in the history of Australia.

The aims of the NMA in the early 1980s were similar. Yet there was an added emphasis on cultural diversity as the core of Australia's mature national identity. A close relationship to the development of multicultural policies, through the involvement of Jerzy Zubrzycki, was to influence the future direction of the NMA's ethnic heritage collection and subsequent exhibitions on migration history. And at the MAAS - which through the Hyde Park Barracks project first exhibited a narrative of Sydney's history through different phases of migration - social history was the window through which migrants' stories were first told.

These events were part of a remarkable sea change in museums, and in Australian society more generally. Visitors to any state museum in the early 1980s would have encountered Aboriginal history only through anthropological collections, classified by scientific methods. 'White' history was a progressive narrative of male achievement, illustrated by changing technologies and new scientific discoveries. So much was missing. The stories of ordinary Australians, their daily lives, their cultures, traditions and ancestries were to be found only in small community museums, where they served as self-affirming pioneer stories for those who assembled them. By the end of the 1980s, the foundation for these 'safe' pioneer histories, and the division of

Aboriginal ‘antiquity’ and white ‘progress’, was being slowly eroded. Anniversaries of British colonisation – or was it invasion? – loomed on the horizon. Here was an opportunity for the new history departments in the state museums, and new museums such as the MMSA, to present history that was edgy, relevant and challenging. How they rose to that challenge, and how their efforts were received, is the story of the following two chapters.

2

The first Migration Museum

"There was so much to say, so much new history to present"

Kate Walsh[1]

The 150th anniversary of the British settlement of South Australia in 1986 was celebrated through a carefully choreographed program of events held under the auspices of the Jubilee 150 Board.[2] Official events included a historical re-enactment of the arrival of the first settlers, a spate of family and town reunions, the tracing of family trees and the opening of a suite of new social history museums.[3] The year of celebrations concluded on Proclamation Day, the 28th of December, at the Old Gum Tree in the beachside suburb of Glenelg. On this site in 1836 a crowd of two hundred British immigrants gathered to hear the official proclamation of South Australia as a British Province. The proclamation called upon all colonists to behave in a manner that proved themselves "worthy to be the founders of a great and free colony" and reminded them that the "Native Population" was to be afforded the same protections as "the rest of His Majesty's Subjects", sentiments proudly recalled by those gathered there in 1986.[4] The following day a local newspaper summed up the significance of

[1] Kate Walsh, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 14 December 2009, Adelaide, Australia.

[2] The board members were listed as Mr H R (Kym) Bonython AO, DFC, AFC, Chairman; The Hon G F (Gavin) Keneally, Minister Responsible for Jubilee 150; The Hon P B (Peter) Arnols, MP; Mr Bruce Abrahams; Mrs Wendy Chapman; Mrs A C (Aileen) Ekblom, OBE; Mr W H (Bill) Hayes, AM; Dr P A (Peter) Howell; Mr R J (Bob) Lott; Mr S J (Stephen) Mann; Mr A G (Alan) McGregor; Ms Winnie Pelz; and Mr E B J (Ellis) Wayland, ED. South Australia Jubilee 150 Board, *SA '86: Jubilee 150*, Adelaide: South Australia Jubilee 150 Board, 1986, p. 2.

[3] See Mary Joseph, "Jubilee Projects" (letter to the editor), *Advertiser*, 25 November 1986, p. 18; South Australia Jubilee 150 Board, *South Australia Jubilee 150: Your Organizational Handbook*, Adelaide: South Australia Jubilee 150 Board, 1984. The Maritime Museum in Port Adelaide opened in 1986 as a Jubilee 150 project. The Migration and Settlement Museum officially opened on 23 November 1986, although an earlier exhibition of traditional Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian and Serbian dress opened earlier in the year on Sunday 27th April. See "Museum to display dress styles," *Advertiser*, 26 April 1986, p. 17, and "New life for an old part of town," *Advertiser*, 22 April 1986, p. 3.

[4] "Governor Hindmarsh, first proclamation, 28 December 1846," reproduced in Brian Dickey and Peter Howell (eds), *South Australia's foundation: select documents*, Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 1986, p.77. The proclamation is read at each Proclamation Day ceremony.

Jubilee 150, reporting that the year had been one that "paid a great tribute to the pioneers who settled and developed this state... it has helped South Australians to rediscover themselves, and to appreciate their identity".[5]

Margaret Anderson, the director of the Migration Museum, one of the new social history museums which opened in 1986, remembers that at the time South Australian history was fairly uncritical and based on an idea of the colonists as "high-minded middle class noble persons who were all here for the betterment of themselves and society".[6] The program of events and suggested community activities for Jubilee 150 reflected this attitude, with an emphasis on early settler history, the restoration of historic sites, and the writing of celebratory town, organisational and state histories. The pioneer legend was persistent and uncontested in these narratives. However, the recent past, particularly the years since the Second World War, were not considered formative to the identity of South Australians. Susan Marsden has observed that most of the "avalanche of histories that tumbled of the presses" in 1986 focused on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[7] By contrast her account of the Adelaide district of Woodville from 1977 to 1987 demonstrated the immense environmental, economic and social transformations that had occurred in that decade alone.[8] It was in this unlikely context that Australia's first museum of migration opened.

Although South Australia's Jubilee 150 took place just two years before the contested national celebrations of the Australian Bicentenary, it was unmarred by public protest or dissent. The myth that South Australia had been settled peacefully by the British

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[5] "SA's Celebratory year", *Advertiser*, 29 December 1986, p. 18.
[6] Anderson, Interview.
[7] Susan Marsden, "A history of Woodville 1977-1987," unpublished manuscript, p. 3, available from the Professional Historians Association of South Australia website: http://www.sahistorians.org.au/175/documents/susan-marsden-a-history-of-woodville-1977-1987.shtml.
[8] These changes were wrought through an ageing post-war migrant population, the arrival of new migrant groups, the economic recession of the early 1980s and the building of an artificial lakes scheme.

and that no wrongs had been done to the Aboriginal population was a powerful one.[9] And, unlike the Bicentenary with its overtly multicultural theme of 'Living Together', cultural diversity was not germane to the particular South Australian identity being celebrated.[10] Instead, a proud, linear and culturally homogeneous colonial narrative was adhered to, occasionally punctuated by the contributions of other "multi-cultural" groups.[11] Graeme Davison has observed that the stories told during national commemorations can tell us more about the "politics of the present" that "the ideals of the past".[12] What we can observe in Adelaide in 1986 is the beginnings of a shift in thinking about South Australia's history – a new politics of the past that challenged the old. This change was encapsulated in the Migration Museum (MMSA), which opened in the heart of Adelaide in November 1986 and told a very different version of South Australian history. Heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, invasion rather than colonisation, and commemoration rather than celebration were all part of this alternative narrative of South Australian history, seen through the lens of migrant arrivals.

Given this radical approach, and the place of the MMSA as the world's first dedicated museum of migration, it is surprising that little has been written about this ground-breaking institution.[13] Its history has slipped into an kind of subconscious, sometimes dismissed as merely 'multicultural' and rarely discussed in terms of significance to

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[9] For example see R.M. Gibbs, *A History of South Australia: from colonial days to the present*, Blackwood, South Australia: Southern Heritage, 1995 (Revised edition, first published 1969). Gibbs writes of the Aborigines as "the first settlers", followed by the British (p. 3). This language erased the cultural and political context of British colonisation, and glossed over the devastation and conflict wrought by the arrival of the British. This unproblematic version of South Australian settlement has been challenged in the historiography of the last two decades. See, for example, Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck, *Fatal collisions: The South Australian frontier and the violence of memory*, Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2001.

[10] For more on the choice of Bicentennial theme see Paul Ashton, *Waving the Waratah: bicentenary New South Wales*, Sydney: New South Wales Bicentennial Council, 1989, pp. 41-43.

[11] A Families and Cultural Communities Executive Committee was charged with recognising the "major contribution multi-cultural communities have made to South Australia" and was to encourage their participation. However, this committee was also responsible for the involvement of aborigines, religious groups, senior citizens and the disabled, and was only one of nineteen executive committees of the Jubilee 150 Board. See *South Australia Jubilee 150: Your Organisational Handbook*, pp. 7-10.

[12] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, p. 57.

[13] Most of the literature on the Migration Museum has been self-generated, such as guide books and conference papers written by curators. Katherine Goodnow's 2008 book *Museums, the Media and Refugees* included a brief analysis of a number of the museum's exhibitions. See Introduction, pp. 15-21.

Australian history as a whole. In this chapter I explore the content and structure of the original 1986 galleries and a number of early temporary exhibitions to evaluate their ideological underpinnings and establish their broader historical impact, particularly on other Australian museums. Interviews with the Museum's inaugural director, Margaret Anderson, the first curators, Viv Szekeres and Anna Malgorzewicz, and Kate Walsh, who joined the curatorial team in 1987, combined with archival research in the museum's working files and records reveal a story of the MMSA that explains both the innovative way it worked and the type of history it told.

Site and staff

The museum is located in two historic buildings tucked behind the State Library of South Australia. These now-picturesque structures were built in the mid-nineteenth century as a Destitute Asylum and Lying-In Hospital for unwed mothers. Before that, the site had briefly housed Aboriginal boys and girls of the South Australian colonial government's Native School Establishment, and for a time Irish orphans had also lived there. Only one wall survived from this earlier structure. The buildings were transferred to the History Trust of South Australia in the early 1980s. Archaeological investigation was followed by a restoration of the buildings and a transformation of the interiors for their new use as museum galleries.[14] It was during this period that the significance of the site as a place of women's history was unearthed, and, as a result of the interests of the first appointed staff, women's history was exhibited in one of the opening galleries of the MMSA.

Margaret Anderson was the Museum's first staff member. She responded to an advertisement for the position of Director of the Ethnic Museum in 1982, whilst she was working in the History Department at the WA Museum.[15] When she moved to Adelaide to begin the job later that year, she was still working on an existing project funded by the Australian Research Council on the fertility patterns of women in colonial Australia. Once in Adelaide she was assisted in the demographic research by

[14] The Native School was first opened in 1845. See Finnimore, *Migration Museum*, pp. 3-4.
[15] Anderson, Interview.

Kate Walsh, who later became a curator at the MMSA in 1987.[16] This project was firmly engaged in both the subject matter and methods of the new social history.[17] Using the records of births, deaths and marriage registers in Perth and Adelaide, Anderson and Walsh found hitherto unrecognised patterns of women limiting their number of births. It is clear then why, for Anderson, the Museum's site was so powerful. She remembers, "for anyone interested in women's history, and I was, acutely, it was a gift".[18]

Since its inception, the MMSA has been characterized by an almost exclusively female staff with qualifications in education and history. Viv Szekeres, who joined Margaret Anderson as the museum's first curator in May 1984, had been teaching part-time at the South Australian College of Advanced Education. She had an eclectic background which Anderson recognised was suited to museum work including training in stage and theatre design, an honours degree in history and experience in school and childhood education. She also had a personal interest in migration history and cultural history based on her Jewish family background and her own migration to Australia from England in 1971. Kate Walsh also had a background in education, having spent seven years teaching in secondary schools in Victoria, and was a trained historian. Anna Malgorzewicz came to the MMSA after taking a research position with the History Trust, where she surveyed portable cultural heritage in South Australia to inform new heritage protection legislation. When the position of assistant curator for the MMSA was advertised, Malgorzewicz applied not only because of an interest in museums garnered through the cultural heritage project, but because of her family history. Her parents were Polish Catholics who had left their homeland in the 1930s for England, where she was born. She migrated to Australia as a young girl with her family, an experience which imbued her with a "very strong historical conscience".[19] This group

[16] Walsh, Interview. Kate Walsh initially shared the curator role with Glen Cook, who later left to join the NMA to work on its migrant heritage collection.
[17] See Waterhouse, "Locating the New Social History"; Susan Magarey "What is happening to women's history in Australia at the beginning of the third millennium?," *Women's History Review* vol. 16, no. 1, February 2007, http://www.history.sa.gov.au/chu/programs/history_conference/SusanMagarey-WhatIsHappeningToWomen%27sHistory.pdf.
[18] Anderson, Interview.
[19] Anna Malgorzewicz, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 4 November 2010, Darwin, Australia.

of women, all in the early stages of their careers, with a mix of personal backgrounds, and only one with prior museum experience (Anderson), developed and executed the Museum's exhibitions in less than four years. Szekeres remembers that it was a "very vibrant, interesting team of people", who together constructed the type of stories they believed needed to be told.[20] These stories unfolded throughout the six permanent galleries, and later in the three temporary exhibition spaces at the MMSA.

The permanent galleries of the Museum were opened by the South Australian Premier John Bannon on the 23rd of November, 1986. There was some nervousness over the reception of the exhibitions, particularly from the Director of the History Trust, Peter Cahalan, who had recently dealt with political controversy at the Constitutional Museum. But the exhibitions were well received.[21] Anderson remembers that Cahalan said to her at the opening, "Well you've nailed your ideological colours to the mast, haven't you!" Instead of censure, the Museum's exhibitions engendered an immense buzz and excitement from migrant communities. Some, including Kampuchean, Latvian, South American and Italian-Spanish groups participated in national dancing and singing at the opening ceremony.[22] In Anderson's words, "people were just immensely excited that for the first time there were groups in society whose stories were being represented in a state museum".[23]

The press coverage was also positive. Interestingly, journalists highlighted the darker moments in South Australia's migrant history featured in the exhibitions. *The Advertiser* reported Bannon's remark that: "the museum didn't try to cover up the unpleasant aspects of early migration".[24] Another article opened with the story of several hundred innocent South Australians of German descent who were interned on Torrens Island during the First World War, describing the incident as a "blot on SA's

[20] Viv Szekeres, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 14 December 2009, Adelaide, Australia.
[21] Controversy broke out in 1983 after an exhibition in the Constitutional Museum's community access gallery, Speakers' Corner, argued that the Holocaust never happened. The exhibition was mounted by the Australian League of Rights. The Jewish community and others picketed the display and demanded its closure. For more on this incident see Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory," and Szekeres, "Exhibiting conflict – who dares?".
[22] "Migration museum opened!," *Advertiser*, 24 November 1986, p. 10.
[23] Anderson, Interview.
[24] "Migration museum opened!," *Advertiser*.

history".[25] In the same article the White Australia Policy, and Australia's "somewhat tardy approach to the acceptance of refugees from war-shattered Europe" were also mentioned. The journalist asserted that "despite its origins in London, and its British base, SA was multicultural almost from the colony's inception". This coverage suggests that the curators were able to convey the message that migration history amounted to more than migrant contributions, and instead shed light on past governmental practices and social prejudices. However, coverage in other states was brief, referring only to the opening of Australia's first "multicultural and immigration museum".[26] The label "multicultural" would stay with the museum for many years, bespeaking the tension inherent in the genesis of the museum – a tension between minority and mainstream history.

[25] Chris Milne, "Moving In, Settling Down: the Story of SA's Migrant Influence," *Advertiser*, 22 November 1986, p. 5.
[26] See for example "Regular shorts," *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 November 1986, p. 4.

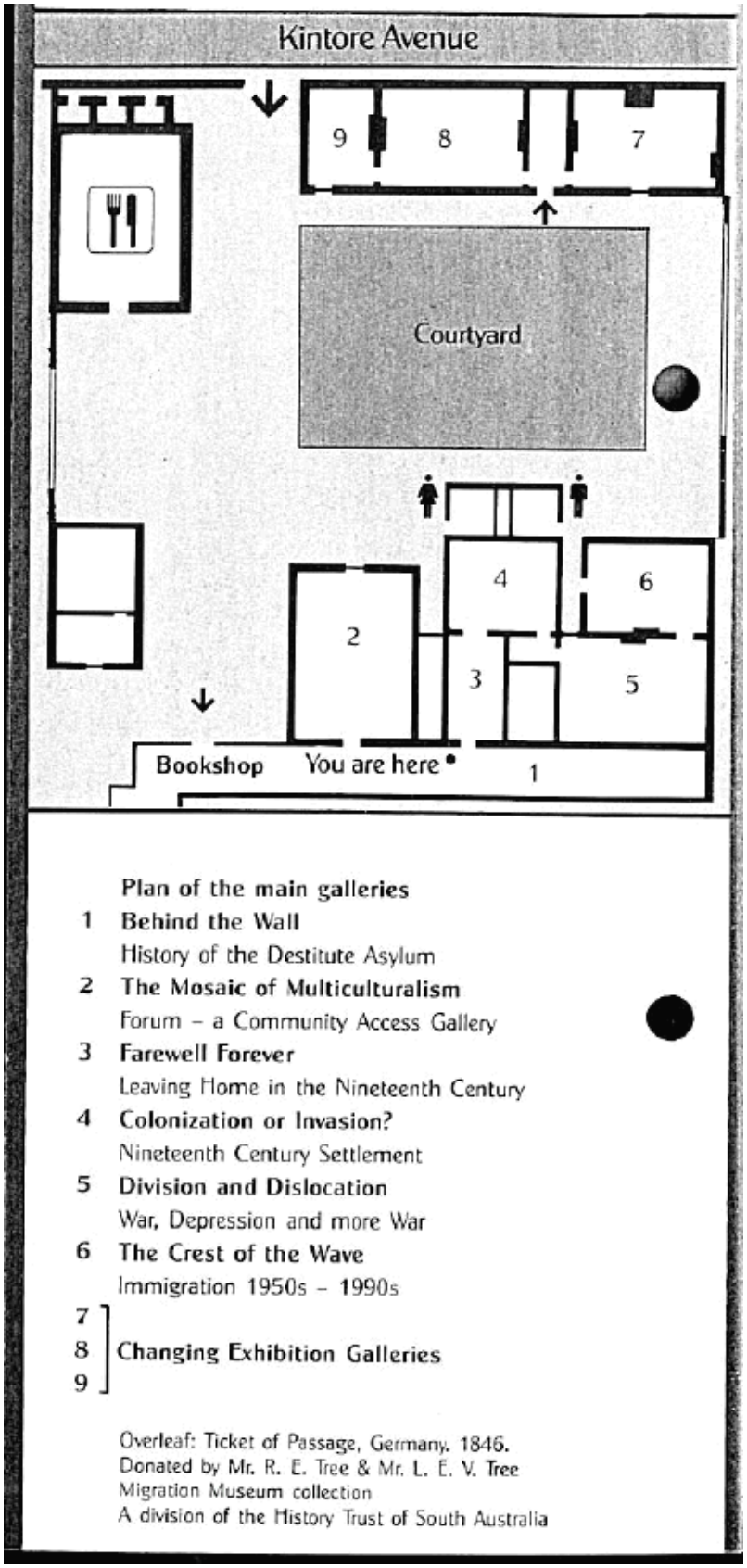

Figure 1: Map of the Migration Museum c1986, on back of 'Ticket of Passage', a pass given to all visitors which was a copy of a German immigrant's ticket from Bremen to Port Adelaide from 1846.

The Mosaic of Multiculturalism, the *Forum*, and 'communities'

The museum's six permanent galleries occupied the former Destitute Asylum building. Across the courtyard, three temporary galleries were situated in the former Lying-In Hospital. A chapel, dating from the same time as the other 19th century buildings, housed a cafe for hungry museum visitors and passers-by. A bookshop near the reception area offered publications on different ethnic community histories as well as postcards and small souvenirs.

At the reception desk, visitors were greeted with a 'ticket of passage', a copy of a ticket issued to Mr H. Spierl and his wife for their passage from Bremen to Port Adelaide in 1846. On the back of the ticket was printed a map of the Museum (see Figure 1). These tickets were designed to put visitors in the shoes of an immigrant from the beginning of their museum experience. From galleries three through to six (the chronological galleries) they would journey through the history of migration to South Australia, finally arriving at the present. But first, visitors were invited to "venture behind the forbidding wall of the Destitute asylum".[27] This introductory exhibit was a history of the site itself. A few objects salvaged from the archaeological investigation of the site were displayed, including a pair of women's boots found under the floorboards of the mothers' wards. Although it did not specifically deal with migration, the curatorial approach to the history of the site in *Behind the Wall* set the tone for all the other galleries. The labels exemplified a strong commitment to social history, and explained why so little remained to document the women who once lived there:

> *The experiences of the poor and working people have not been valued by our society which is why you will rarely see the material evidence of their lives in museums.*[28]

Opening to the left of the corridor was Gallery 2, *The Mosaic of Multiculturalism*. This gallery also housed the *Forum*, a community access gallery modelled on Speaker's Corner at the Constitutional Museum.[29] The exhibition text explained the difference between immigration policy and multicultural policy, reminding visitors that the latter

[27] Text for brochure, c1986, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 1.
[28] 'Behind the Wall' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 1.
[29] See Chapter 1, pp. 60-61.

was "concerned with Australian residents, people who have decided to make Australia their home".[30] The main method of communication was an audio-visual programme screened continuously, featuring interviews with eight South Australians. The interviewees included musicians, artisans and historians from Latvian, Italian, Chilean, German, Greek and Chinese backgrounds, all but one born overseas. They were chosen because they were all involved in activities, either professionally or in their leisure time, which expressed specific cultural identities.

Szekeres wrote in 1987 that the curators' aim was "to pose questions and prompt discussion and debate, and to present visitors with some of the complexities and contradictions which emerge in discussions about the nature of culture and identity".[31] By outlining the government policy of multiculturalism, and then featuring individual South Australians' perspectives on the meanings of cultural identity, curators hoped to avoid the impression that they were imposing an "official" version of multicultural ideology upon visitors. However, some complexities were left unaddressed, perhaps simplifying the narrative of the video presentation. Szekeres acknowledged that not all immigrants choose to maintain their cultural identities, and that traditions can also change over time. "For our purposes", she wrote, "we decided to leave these extremely complex questions alone".[32]

This was the type of display most readily associated with the early years of the MMSA, and can be seen to exemplify what Ian McShane has called the "enrichment narrative".[33] When the 'multicultural era' was first historicized in the late 1990s, this earlier period began to be seen as uncritical at best and counter-productive at worst. Rather than transforming society, the display of 'multicultural' migrant cultures was seen to 'enrich' or contribute to the core, whilst remaining on the ethnic periphery. These arguments were adapted from radical critiques of multiculturalism such as those by Andrew Jackubowicz, who argued as early as 1984 that multicultural policies

[30] 'Multiculturalism – Sharing Our Future' text panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 2.
[31] Szekeres, "The use of oral history in museum displays", 115.
[32] Ibid.
[33] McShane, "Challenging or conventional?," 128-129.

isolated only the cultural histories and traditions of migrants, rather than their political and class histories.[34] However, the aims of museum displays such as these were more practical than such critiques suggest. As Alistair Thompson has observed, "oral history projects played an important role in contesting mono-cultural histories and asserting ethnic Australian identities".[35] Within the social and political context of the mid-1980s, displays like *The Mosaic of Multiculturalism* strongly asserted that belonging to the nation (or in this case, the state) did not depend on adherence to certain 'Australian' rituals and traditions. This affirmation, echoing the sentiments of multicultural policy, also had the important consequence of involving people in the Museum who might otherwise have assumed their stories were not important.

An example of this practical approach is the MMSA's collection of community banners, which depict the migration and settlement experiences of different groups in South Australia. The project was Szekeres' attempt to make initial connections between the Museum and migrant communities. Groups were contacted through Multicultural SA (the South Australian Ethnic Affairs Commission), and of about one hundred letters sent, the museum received fifty replies. Of these, thirty six groups came to the museum to construct the banners.[36] Most who came continued their relationship with the museum, either by mounting their own community exhibitions in the *Forum* gallery, or by contributing objects and stories to curated exhibitions. Szekeres remembers the banners project as "community work, at a very basic level, working brilliantly".[37] This collaborative approach was, at the time, a completely new way of building collections.[38] Somewhere between a commission and an acquisition, it also built relationships with people who had an interest in the work of the Museum. This type of activity saw the MMSA function like a community group or migrant resource centre – a place to meet, exchange information and make connections. The social role

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[34] See Andrew Jakubowicz, "State and Ethnicity: Multi-Culturalism as Ideology," in James Jupp (ed), *Ethnic Politics in Australia*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin,1984, pp. 14-28.
[35] Thompson, "Moving Stories: Oral History and Migration Studies," 32.
[36] Szekeres, Interview.
[37] Ibid.
[38] The banners collection has grown since, and now numbers more than forty. They are displayed on a rotating basis at the Museum. See the MMSA website, http://www.history.sa.gov.au/migration/collections/banners_project.htm.

of the MSMA was to influence the work of other Australian museums in the years to come.

Of course, there were limitations to this approach. The communities that were interested in telling their stories were the ones that responded to the call. Other more recently arrived or less cohesive groups were not represented.[39] This is evident in the two oral history projects conducted during the development of the exhibitions. One was on the theme of multiculturalism, which formed the basis of the aforementioned video in Gallery 2. The other was called "The Polish experience", and, as the name suggests, focused solely on the experiences of Polish DPs who came to South Australian after the Second World War. Anderson remembers that the Poles were "a very organised and coherent group, they were probably more highly educated than some and they obviously could see the benefit of being associated with this project so they were very forthcoming".[40] Poles were also represented on the advisory committee of the Museum, and as a result, their views and priorities were well voiced. By contrast, South Australia's Cambodian community had no representatives on the committee. Another limitation of the Museum's focus on engaging ethnic communities, and showcasing their cultures and traditions, was the implication that Anglo or mainstream Australians lacked their own cultural traditions. This was a problem that future exhibitions would work hard to redress.

Museologist Tony Bennett argues that museums that seek to represent communities in this way (through granting them access to represent themselves in community galleries, or consulting them for other exhibitions), are actually engaged in the very *production* of those communities and cultures.[41] Interestingly, Szekeres recalls that at the banner-making day, initial contacts were made between migrants of the same

[39] Curators of community focus galleries have written about the problem of defining and working with so-called 'communities'. See Witcomb, "A place for all of us" in *Reimagining the museum: Beyond the mausoleum*, especially p. 101; Anderson, "Roundtable – access: Commitment or containment?", *Museums National*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1993, 4-7; Szekeres, "A place for all of us"; Szekeres, "Myths, Meaning and minefields: The Construction of Reality at the Migration Museum"; Walsh, "The challenge of diversity."
[40] Anderson, Interview.
[41] See discussion by Witcomb, *Reimagining the museum: Beyond the mausoleum*, pp. 15-17, 79-81.

supposed 'communities' that lasted for many years. The extent to which governments and museums produce culture has been debated at length by other scholars including Andrea Witcomb and James Clifford.[42] A similar commentary has surrounded the concept of "self-ethnicisation".[43] While these theories can help us to understand the legacy of early community work, my interest in canvassing the opening exhibitions of the MMSA is different. Regardless of whether we accept the notion that the Museum played an important role in *producing* ethnic communities (and I err on the side of Witcomb here who suggests a more dialogic relationship between government, museums and communities), we must also consider how those communities' histories were *located* within the overall narrative of the Museum's exhibitions. For instance, was cultural diversity seen as a recent phenomenon at the MMSA, or did it have deep roots in colonial (or pre-colonial) South Australia? Was diversity seen only in terms of ethnic communities, or also in Anglo-Celtic ones? To ascertain this we must look not to the community gallery, but to the main chronological galleries and early temporary exhibitions.

Chronological galleries: South Australia's immigration story

The four chronological galleries of the MMSA told the "immigration story" of South Australia from first European settlement to present day.[44] Rather than begin with the arrival of settlers, the first gallery explored their departure from Britain. It was called *Farewell Forever: Leaving home in the 19th Century.* This was followed by *Colonization or Invasion? 19th Century Settlement*, which focused on the lives of settlers and Indigenous Australians in the first decades of colonisation. The next two galleries addressed the twentieth century. The first, *Division and Dislocation: War, Depression and more War*, covered Federation to the end of the Second World War. The second, *The Crest of the Wave: Immigration 1950s-1990s*, looked at the experiences of post-war migrants, changes to immigration legislation and the arrival of Indo-Chinese and South American refugees in the 1970s.

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[42] See James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in David Boswell and Jessica Evans (eds), *Representing the nation: a reader; histories, heritage and museums*, New York; Routledge, 1999, pp. 435-457; Witcomb Ibid.

[43] See Jon Stratton, "Not just another multicultural story," *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 66, 2000, 23-47. This concept is discussed later, in Chapter 5, p. 211.

[44] Text for brochure, c1986, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 1.

The decision to exhibit this history chronologically involved confronting the tension between the nature of the Museum as a place to represent migrant communities, and the largely British history of migration to South Australia. As Anderson remembers:

> The tension came because the approach to history in this museum was always in terms of migration and ethnicity, so the starting point was diversity rather than Anglo, but the history itself in the nineteenth century was so strongly Anglo… the compromise was to think about the creation of South Australia from a whole host of migrant peoples, but reflecting the fact that for at least the first 120 years it was strongly Anglo-Saxon and the whole culture of migration and the process was based on that.[45]

The chronological division of galleries reflected the historical record, demonstrating the constancy of British settlement across the preceding 150 years, but also drew attention to the diversity within the "host of migrant peoples". An exhibition panel from *Farwell Forever* read:

> *Most of the immigrants to South Australia have been English.*
> *Who are the English and where do they come from?*
> *England occupies more than half of the island of Great Britain.*
> *It has an early history of invasion by the Celts, Romans, Angles and Saxons, Danes and Normans. As a result strong differences, and accents, are part of the English culture.*[46]

Bringing English history into the story of South Australian colonisation was an attempt to encourage 'Anglo' or 'white' visitors to consider their own cultural heritage – whether they were descendant from the first settlers, or more recent arrivals from the influx of post war 'ten Pound Poms'. Many stories of English migration were represented throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century galleries, yet as Margaret Anderson remembers, some visitors still left with an impression that the MMSA was an "ethnic museum" and that "there is nothing about the British here".[47] Perhaps what these visitors were reacting to was the lack of a clear pioneer narrative. Without this familiar history, which was deliberately challenged in the nineteenth century galleries, the English became just another (albeit dominant) group of migrants.

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[45] Anderson, Interview.
[46] 'Farewell Forever' panel, c1986, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 3.
[47] Anderson, Interview.

Starting in the 'home country' also allowed curators to trace the migrant experience, from packing and organising, to the journey, and finally to the new country and the process of settlement. Exhibition design echoed this experience – the *Farewell Forever* gallery was made to look like a port of departure in mid-nineteenth century England. The space was small and dark, in stark contrast to the next gallery, *Colonization or Invasion*, which was designed to appear bright and blue, like a brilliant Southern sky in the new land.[48]

The overall theme of *Farewell Forever* was that people's different economic and social status shaped their experience of migration. To communicate this, curators chose to juxtapose two scenes, effectively splitting the gallery in two. On one side, a brick exterior of a 19th century home invited visitors to peer though its windows at a life size diorama of a middle class family packing all their worldly goods. On the other, a three dimensional streetscape had been created using blown-up historical photographs. A haggard looking woman clutched her baby, two nearby children appeared ragged and unsupervised, a man stood with his arms crossed. It was a desperate scene of poverty and urban squalor, a picture of poor Londoners designed to communicate the reasons why they would choose to leave to find better prospects. On the cobblestone floor where visitors stood to survey the scene laid coils of rope, symbolising the sea voyage.[49]

For the middle class diorama, curators had constructed an intimate scene of a family packing their belongings in preparation to emigrate. Models of a mother, father, small child and baby were dressed in mid-nineteenth century clothes, most of which had been bought especially at auction at Christies in South Kensington the previous year. A trunk, sea trunk, sea chest and chair completed the scene.[50] One of the trunks, a donation to the museum, had been used by John Darling who arrived from Edinburgh in 1855 and later entered the South Australian Parliament. This curious mix of bought,

[48] Gallery 3 Images (35mm slides, in binder), c1986.
[49] Object list for Gallery 3 (Final list for opening), MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 3; Gallery 3 Images (35mm slides, in binder), c1986.
[50] Object list for Gallery 3 (Final list for opening), MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 3.

loaned and donated objects, some of which the provenance was known and others which were chosen merely to be representative, was a result of limited time and resources. Anderson has since reflected:

> I probably bought material that looking back, one might not. But at the time it was available and we needed materials, and we had an acquisitions budget, so we bought it...[51]

Inside the room, signs suspended from the ceiling explained the context of the scene. One pointed out that "packing up and leaving were major crises in peoples' lives". This particular family were planning to travel in intermediate accommodation, which the text explained "is cheaper than the first class cabins which are occupied by the wealthy, but still considered 'respectable'".[52] Another hanging sign was called "Cultural Baggage", and communicated the idea that your culture is something intangible, carried with you always. Curators spelt out this concept for the average museum visitor:

> *Although emigrants uprooted themselves from all that was familiar, they held onto their religious beliefs and ideas about right and wrong and where they fitted into society.*
> *In this cultural baggage they also took with them the certainty that their European way of life was best.*[53]

It is interesting that in this panel the text identified nineteenth century emigrants as "European" as opposed to British, which would have more accurately described the vast majority of arrivals. Certainly, the British thought their culture was superior to all others, including that of continental Europeans. Perhaps this was an attempt to include 19th century German migrants in the text, as they were a small yet significant group of early settlers. Curator Kate Walsh adopted an almost identical passage of text in a change to Gallery 6 in the 1990s. This gallery addressed migration from the 1950s to the 1980s, and as the most historically recent section of the Museum, was reworked more regularly than the other galleries. Walsh remembers her use of the "cultural baggage" concept was "quite deliberate" and designed to encourage people to

[51] Anderson, Interview.
[52] 'Farewell Forever' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 3.
[53] Ibid.

recognise similarities in the experience of migration across different generations and countries of origin.[54]

Motivations for emigration in the nineteenth century were illuminated in a panel of text and graphics called 'A Giant Leap into the Unknown', positioned near the poor London street scene. The reasons people left their homelands were "to escape poverty, hunger and unemployment", "to make a better life", "to find religious freedom" and "chain migration". [55] Drawings of the Irish Famine from the *Illustrated London News* and photographs of businesses owned by successful emigrants were included. Again, these same reasons were echoed in the twentieth century galleries in an effort to dispel the different attitudes towards recent 'migrants' and early 'pioneers', and instead creating a 'nation of immigrants' narrative. The purpose was to give equal legitimacy to arrivals from all countries of origin and across different historical periods.

This history told in *Leaving Home* was informed by the recent contemporary literature on colonial emigration, particularly Don Charlwood's 1980 publication *The long farewell,* which was based on diaries and accounts of life aboard ships by nineteenth century British migrants.[56] The scholarly material on migration that was available in the early 1980s certainly favoured the nineteenth century, as most general histories covered it as the foundation of the nation. However, this period also saw the first publications on race relations in Australia, such Alexander Yarwood and Mike Knowling's work on the subject, first published in 1982.[57] When describing the origins of Australian racial attitudes, the authors explored the cultural heritage of Australians,

[54] Walsh, Interview.
[55] 'A Giant Leap into the Unknown' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 3.
[56] Notes on the living conditions of 1st and 2nd class passengers in the MMSA working file include references to specific pages in Charlwood's book. Don Charlwood, *The long farewell*, Ringwood, Vic.: Allen Lane, 1981.
[57] A.T. Yarwood and M.J. Knowling, *Race relations in Australia: a history*, North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Australia, 1982.

and in particular, the "invisible luggage" of migrants.[58] So although the MMSA curators were challenged by a small field of secondary literature on migration heritage (especially in the twentieth century), the intellectual currents they were following were already flowing steadily in Australia.

One of the stories that Szekeres, Anderson and Malgorzewicz thought needed telling was the prior occupation of the land by Aboriginal people, which was in most histories of South Australia a short and uneventful prelude to the far more significant history of the British colony.[59] To challenge this version of history was to challenge the identity that many South Australians held (especially those descendants of the early British colonists). Such a potentially divisive topic was not part of the official remit of the Museum, nor was it part of the Museum's perceived public role as a place to cater for the preservation of ethnic communities' heritage. But it was a priority for the curators, who wanted to situate colonisation at the beginning of South Australia's immigration history, and to suggest that it could also be viewed from the Aboriginal perspective as an invasion. They were supported in this view by recent publications in Indigenous history, such as Henry Reynolds' *The Other Side of the Frontier* and by the growing movement for Indigenous land rights, a topic which had been exhibited by their History Trust colleagues at the Constitutional Museum in the exhibition *Land Rights Now*.[60] They were also inspired by a 1982 exhibition curated by Julia Clark at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) called *Aboriginal People of Tasmania*. Like *Land Rights Now*, it used the term "invasion" to describe the arrival of Europeans in Australia. It was also the first exhibition to refer to frontier conflict as a "war" and to explore Aboriginal responses as organised "resistance".[61] So with the support of the History Trust, and the State government at the time, the difficult theme was pursued. Szekeres says that despite some opposition from experts at the South Australian

[58] Ibid, p. 12. Cultural baggage is a concept first used commonly in the 1920s American sociological literature on immigrants. See Jon Gjerde, "New Growth on Old Vines: The State of the Field: The Social History of Immigration to and Ethnicity in the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 18, no. 4, Summer 1999, 40-65.
[59] For example, Gibbs, *A History of South Australia: from colonial days to the present*, pp. 2-3.
[60] For the Constitutional Museum, see Chapter 1, p. 60. Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia,* Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1982.
[61] Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory: 1970 – 2008." The exhibition opened in 1982.

Museum (who were "very unhappy" about the use of the word "invasion"), there was "no great outcry".[62] This is in stark contrast to the furore over the use of the word "invasion" at the Powerhouse Museum just two years later, and indeed it is a controversy that continues to surface in Australian politics.[63]

Visitors did find some elements of *Colonization or Invasion* disturbing and shocking, as curators hoped they would. A large life sized image of a group of Aboriginal men chained at the neck that covered half of one wall was particularly confronting, eliciting responses of disbelief that such things happened in South Australia.[64] Although the title of the gallery suggested two interpretations, the exhibition text made clear the curators' own conviction that 1836 was indeed an invasion. The language used was accusatory and lacked some context – an explanation of the importance of race ideology would have nuanced the interpretation.[65] Statements like "The European invaders did not understand Aboriginal culture and most did not try. They thought their own was superior" were designed to shake local visitors out of their perception of South Australia as "the perfect colony".[66] Frontier violence and the taking of Aboriginal children from their parents were also referred to, indicating that curators were engaged with growing field of Aboriginal history. [67]

Curators even went so far as to suggest that genocide had occurred in South Australia – the first time such a claim had been made in an Australian museum. This panel read:

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[62] Szekeres, Interview.

[63] The Powerhouse Museum controversy is examined in the following chapter. In June 2011 the City of Sydney Council voted to replace the words "European arrival" with "this invasion" in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statement. The decision sparked a by-now familiar backlash from those who thought the Council was "rewriting history". See Vicki Campion and Rosemary Lentini, "Sydney council causing trouble over 'invasion' versus 'settlement'," *Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 2011.

[64] The image was dated c1880, the original held by the Mortlock Library of South Australiana. MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

[65] These ideas had already been explored in the burgeoning field of race relations. For instance, see Alexander Yarwood and Mike Knowling, *Race relations in Australia: a history*, North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Australia, 1982.

[66] 'Hunted and Herded' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

[67] One panel read "memories of atrocities, including raiding parties, poisoned wells and flour, survive in Aboriginal oral traditions, although they rarely appear in official government documents"; another stated "One alternative for Aboriginal people was to become 'black-white' people. Often children were taken away from their parents to be 'civilized'. The results were largely less than happy." MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

> *Genocide is an emotive word, but how else should we describe the disappearance of whole communities like the Kaurna of the Adelaide Plains? Only in the harsh interior, in land unattractive to Europeans, did groups manage to survive the full impact of white settlement.*[68]

While the acknowledgement of Aboriginal dispossession was in itself a step forward from the previous anthropological portrayal of indigenous culture in the South Australian Museum, the portrayal of Aboriginal South Australians as victims in this new narrative did little to communicate their ongoing involvement in history, and ironically almost erased them altogether. As the historiography on the topic began to redress earlier deficiencies, recognising Aboriginal agency and Aboriginal perspectives, as well as acknowledging relationships of accommodation between Europeans and Aboriginal people, the MMSA too changed its interpretation.[69] In the 1990s the genocide panel was amended, with the following statement added on a pull-down blind:

> *The focus of history shifts. In 1985 we wrote the paragraph GENOCIDE to tell our visitors that Europeans did many wrongs to Aboriginal people. That was in the decade of the struggle for Aboriginal land rights. Today we celebrate the survival of their cultural heritage in their own land.*[70]

This layering of text was a novel concept, one that deliberately exposed the fluidity of historical interpretation and the self-reflective authorship of the MMSA curators.

The idea of explorers as heroic figures and founders was another important part of South Australian history and one that most visitors would have been familiar with. Curators sought to question this importance in a display called 'The Face of a Hero?', which addressed the role of Captain Charles Sturt in the founding of the colony. A timeline traced Sturt's many expeditions to explore the Australian continent, their successes and failures, his death in poverty in England in 1869, and the formation of a historical society by descendants of members of Sturt's expeditions in Adelaide in 1964, who were "dedicated to preserving the memory of this brave South Australian

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[68] 'Genocide' panel, c1986, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

[69] For a summary of this historiographical shift see Attwood and Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, pp. 6-9. The Mabo land rights case of 1992 which led to the passage of the Native Title Act in 1993 was entwined with this shift.

[70] 'Genocide' panel update, c1990s, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

pioneer and his companions". Having situated the image of 'Sturt the brave pioneer' as a product of recent times, the contemporary perspectives of Aboriginal activists and feminists were then raised, including activists' anger over the assertion that Sturt "discovered" their lands, and feminists' indignation that history is "so often about the exploits of great men".[71] Here curators were again going beyond the bounds of migration and multiculturalism to create a broader critical social history of South Australia.

The environmental effects of colonisation were also seen in mostly critical terms. Bushland became "sheep runs, wheat fields and small farms", and quarries "scarred the landscape".[72] This was far from the version of history promoted during Jubilee 150, in which wheat and wool were celebrated as the foundation of a successful and industrious colony.[73] The pioneers were cast in a new light too. Settlers' wives led gruelling lives of childminding, housework, and farm work. A caption on a photograph of some of these women read "apart from the cows, what's changed?" suggesting that women continued to carry the bulk of unpaid work in the home.[74] Men's working lives were seen in terms of class. A display of generic workers' tools juxtaposed with particular colonial officers' uniforms made the point that workers' material culture is often anonymous and survives by chance. On the other hand, middle and upper class colonists left objects that were in some cases carefully preserved along with their names and stories.

As well as challenging previous historical narratives, curators sought to highlight instances where religious and ethnic diversity were features of nineteenth century settlement. They called this section "Seeds of a multicultural society". The well known German and Polish Lutheran settler communities were mentioned, as well as the smaller numbers of Afghans, Chinese, Italians, Lebanese, Spanish and Scandinavians

[71] 'The Face of a hero?' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.
[72] 'Changing the Landscape' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.
[73] Gibbs, *A History of South Australia*, p. 65.
[74] 'Working Lives' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.

who had settled in the colony. References to multiculturalism were peppered through these panels, such as:

> *Most of the immigrants arriving in South Australia in the nineteenth century came from Great Britain. But the seeds of our multicultural society were also present.*[75]

In another section on the 'Britishness' of South Australian society, called "An Outpost of Empire", a label lamented that "official recognition of multiculturalism would have to wait another one hundred years".[76] This seems curious given the overwhelmingly British character of nineteenth century migration. The design of this section took the form of a mantelpiece, where plates and vases commemorating British events such as the 1887 Golden Jubilee celebrations were displayed. Over the mantelpiece an imposing portrait of Queen Victoria peered down.[77] A desire for official recognition of multiculturalism was not present in colonial South Australia. Yet it was clearly embraced by the curators of the exhibition. This anachronistic conception of multiculturalism reveals the tension Anderson acknowledged between the largely mono-cultural history of nineteenth century immigration, and the wish of the curators to demonstrate that contemporary cultural diversity had historical antecedents. In the two nineteenth century galleries, then, the MMSA curators essentially rewrote South Australian colonial history through a reinterpretation of objects, and communicated this using a critical curatorial voice throughout the exhibition texts.

In the alcove between the nineteenth and twentieth century galleries was (and still is) an interactive display called 'The White Australia Walk'. The text asked visitors "would you have been allowed to emigrate to Australia between 1901 and 1958?" and presented them with seven options, which could be selected using traffic light buttons. Depending on the option they chose the lights flashed green, orange or red. If you picked "You are a white British migrant" a green light would flash with the result "Welcome to Australia". Picking "You are an Asian merchant. Your trade benefits Australia" would also result in green and the instructions "Collect your certificate of

[75] 'Seeds of a multicultural society' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.
[76] 'More British than the British' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 4.
[77] Gallery 4 Images (35mm slides, in binder), c1986.

exemption now. Valid for 1 year. Renewable. Restricted migrant". The exhibit demonstrated the arbitrary nature of these laws through the large amount of options that flashed orange or red. For example "You are an Irish girl called Ellen Fitzgibbon" gave the result "The immigration official does not like the look of you. Take a dictation test in Swedish. Failed. Go back to Ireland". An orange resulted from "You are Japanese. Married to an Australian. The Minister for Immigration will decide whether you may live here or not".

Figure 2: The White Australia Walk. Photograph, Eureka Henrich, September 2009.

The White Australia Walk was very popular with visitors and remains one of the few parts of the galleries left unchanged after the redevelopment of the museum in the 2000s. As the first attempt to explore the impact of the White Australia Policy in a museum context, it was ahead of its times. Margaret Anderson remembers:

> ...we wanted to talk about it [The White Australia Policy] and we wanted to represent it in a way that we could bring it home, not only to adults, but to kids because it's so hard to reflect those things, and because the material culture of

> the White Australia Policy is pretty sparse... so we were trying to think 'if you're going to represent this without using ten thousand words on the walls how are you going to reflect it?'[78]

For visitors unfamiliar with Australia's long history of racial exclusion, it had powerful shock value. The use of traffic lights, signs and buttons to communicate the outcomes of different migrant applications based on race rendered the results tangible and irrefutable, while the style of the text reminded visitors of a game of Monopoly: "Do not pass go. Do not collect $200". The interactive also brought home the impact of immigration policies on individuals. Like the exhibition of personal stories, this feature was designed to create empathy and understanding.

The rest of Gallery 5 followed similar themes to those in the nineteenth century gallery – the journey of immigrants to Australia (including 'A pleasure trip' illustrating the six week cruise that was the defining experience for many British migrants of this time), and their first impressions of the new country. Events such as the First World War and the Depression were represented by South Australian objects, such as postcards, plaques and badges made by South Australian 'Cheer-Up' societies, "make-do" items from the 1930s and a police baton used in the waterside workers strike during the Depression.[79] Through these objects social history and labour history themes were woven into the narrative of migration.

A large part of the gallery was devoted to the objects and stories of DPs from Europe who arrived in South Australia in the 1940s and 50s, including a theatrette which screened a video based on the photographs and interviews collected during the oral history project with Polish former-DPs.[80] Objects in the gallery included items of clothing worn in concentration camps, identification tags and bracelets, and official papers, many donated by the Polish community. A gallery design that featured barbed wire added a threatening atmosphere to these horrific stories. This type of personal material is now familiar to anyone who has visited a Holocaust museum. However, at

[78] Anderson, Interview.
[79] Object Labels, Gallery 5, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.
[80] Anderson, Interview; Szekeres, "The use of oral history in museum displays," 113.

the time Jewish communities had only just begun to open public museums to display their stories and material culture. The first of these opened in Melbourne in 1982, but there were none in Adelaide.[81] So it was significant that these items were lent or donated by families and community collections for public exhibition at the MMSA. Along with the work being carried out by Zubryzcki and Kunz at the NMA in Canberra, this exhibition at the MMSA asserted that these experiences were part of Australia's national cultural heritage, not just part of migrants 'old' lives. Objects brought by DPs to Australia had continuing meaning and resonance when accompanied by the personal stories of those who owned them. One example was a washboard used by a woman named Wiktoria Swiderska in a German refugee camp. It was displayed along with her words "Every time I used it here, I was reminded of my time as a refugee".[82]

A commentary on Australia's post-war immigration programme, including its methods of selection, transportation and migrant accommodation, provided the historical context for these personal stories and objects.[83] To make the story more engaging for visitors, curators decided to display a Nissen hut, the type of structure many migrants lived in at South Australia's two large migrant hostels, Woodside and Pennington. Unable to secure an actual complete hut, museum staff made a recreation of one based on photographs from the Department of Immigration and oral testimony from those who lived at Pennington Migrant Hostel. Some 'authentic' elements were used, such as an original window from the Hostel that was set into the corrugated iron-exterior of the hut. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs donated original woollen blankets, sheets, pillow cases and a bedspread that were used in Pennington Migrant Hostel.[84]

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[81] See the Jewish Museum of Australia's website, http://www.jewishmuseum.com.au/about.php. The Jewish Community of South Australia developed the exhibition *Tree of Life* for the Migration Museum's Forum Gallery in 1999. It was the impetus for an online Adelaide Jewish Museum. See http://adelaidejmuseum.org/.

[82] Object number HT87.2113(s), MMSA Collection. 'Every time I used it' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

[83] Panels included 'Selecting New Australians' and 'Arrival in Australia'.

[84] Object list, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

The recreation worked on many levels. It educated the public about living conditions for new migrants in the post-war period, stirred nostalgia for those who remembered the camps, and provided a focus for collecting memories. Its popularity is reflected in the adoption of similar displays in other museums over the coming years and decades - the PHM's *Australian Communities* exhibition featured a migrant hostel bedroom recreation in 1988, and the ANMM recreated a migrant hostel bedroom and classroom in their 1998 exhibition, *Tears Fears and Cheers*. A genuine Nissen hut from Pennington Migrant Hostel was later acquired by the NMA, reinforcing the significance of these experiences to Australia's national cultural heritage. The original migrant hostel exhibit at the MMSA was removed when the permanent galleries were refurbished between 2002 and 2007.[85] In the twenty years it had been on display it had provoked many visitors to write down their own memories of living in the migrant hostels, and to share them on the nearby pin board. These responses were carefully stored, and became the basis for the new interactive video about South Australian migrant hostels which is still on display at the museum today.

The political context of the 1940s and the resulting mass immigration, housing shortages and subsequent development boom of the 1950s and 60s occupied half of the final gallery, *The Crest of the Wave*. The other half dealt with the Vietnam War and the subsequent Indo-Chinese refugee arrivals to Australia from the mid-1970s. The core narrative was Australia's changing immigration policy, with an emphasis on the ideal type of migrant sought by the Department of Immigration:

> *During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Australia, with its small population and underdeveloped economy, seemed vulnerable. The Government solution was a mass immigration programme. Refugees from Displaced Persons Camps in Europe were brought to Australia to work on the hydro-electric schemes in Tasmania and the Snowy Mountains. But the Government still preferred British migrants. Unashamedly prejudiced, it hoped to attract 10 British migrants for every 'foreigner'.*[86]

[85] According to curator Catherine Manning, this was largely due to space issues and because the exhibition was looking "tired" after almost 20 years. Visitors still ask where they can find it. Catherine Manning, personal communication, 14 September 2009.
[86] 'Selecting New Australians' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

Figure 3 shows this now iconic image depicting the ideal immigrants – a young British family in a small boat, piled high with their all their worldly possessions, being pulled to Australia by a cheerful kangaroo and her patriotic joey. It is a comic image, and was used by curators to illustrate the 'hard sell' government campaign to 'Bring out a Briton' in the 1950s.

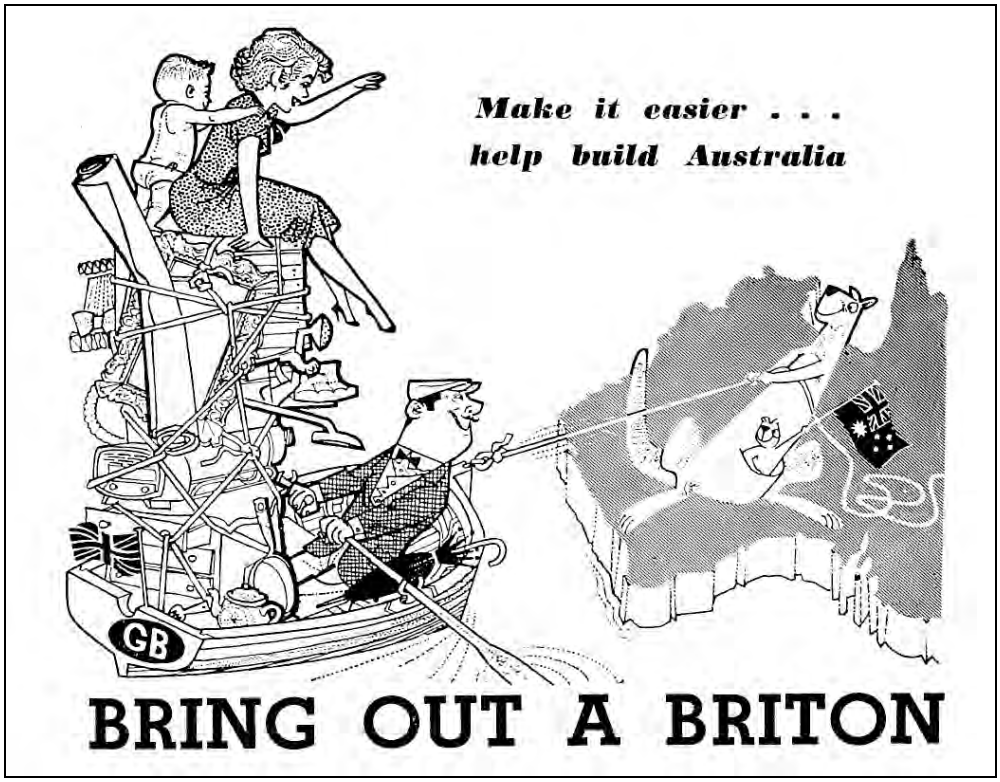

Figure 3: Promotion of the 'Bring Out A Briton' Scheme in the Good Neighbour Bulletin.[87]

A display on Elizabeth, 'The Migrant City', explored how this Adelaide suburb shaped migrant's lives. It was also a critical examination of public housing ventures, both questioning the long term success of pre-fabricated suburbs and exploring the experiences of children who grew up in them. Elizabeth was established on the fringes of Adelaide in 1955 as a purpose-built suburb for large numbers of British migrants, who were attracted by assisted immigration schemes, dreams of home ownership and an endless summer. A section titled 'Letters Home' presented examples of correspondence between British migrants and their families and friends from the 1960s to the 1970s, revealing questions about everything from the weather and

[87] Promotion of the 'Bring Out A Briton' scheme in the *Good Neighbour* bulletin, no. 53, June 1958, reproduced in Walsh, *The Changing Face of Australia: a century of immigration 1901 – 2000*, p. 141.

wages, to what items were available for purchase in Australia. Visitors to the useum could pick up headsets and hear actors reading out these letters, in a range of British accents. The label read "Lift the handset. Listen to what it feels like to leave your home and start a new life in another country".[88] In a museum that was originally funded to take care of 'ethnic' heritage, the extensive inclusion of British migrant memories revealed a recent history which didn't fit with popular ideas about 'ethnics' and 'Aussies'. It demonstrated that even people from countries with similar systems of government, languages and cultures had their own migration stories to tell, and their own tangible and intangible migrant heritages. These 'invisible migrants' were not a focus of the scholarship of migration history at the time.[89] Their inclusion, from the perspective of curators, was a natural reflection of the history of immigration to South Australia.

For the more 'visible' migrants, and for Aboriginal Australians, the aspiration or pressure to assimilate affected nearly all aspects of their lives. In this section of Gallery 6, the shift in government policy from assimilation to multiculturalism was told through the rise and fall of the Good Neighbour Movement, which originated in South Australia:

> *The New Australians were expected to assimilate and become 'dinkum Aussies' as quickly as possible... The* [Good Neighbour] *Council's role was to welcome new immigrants and help them integrate into Australian society... But by the 1970s government policy had changed again. Assimilation was no longer in favour and it was felt that the funds allocated to the Good Neighbour Council should instead be redirected. Migrant resource centres were established instead, in areas with a high migrant population. The resource centres work to smooth the transition to life in Australia. But they also help to preserve as much of each community's traditional language and culture as possible.*[90]

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[88] 'Letters home' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

[89] The only published work on them before the MMSA opened was a foundational study by R.J. Appleyard, *British emigration to Australia*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1964. In 1988 he published, with Alison Rey and Allan Segal, *The ten pound immigrants*, London: Boxtree, 1988. The topic was taken up again by James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson in *Ten Pound Poms: Australia's Invisible Migrants,* Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2005. Thomson's most recent publication on British immigrants takes a more personal approach. See Alistair Thomson, *Moving stories: an intimate history of four women across two countries*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2011.

[90] 'New Australians' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

In terms of the narrative of migration throughout the Museum's exhibitions, the eventual adoption of a policy of multiculturalism in the 1970s provided something of a positive endpoint. However, curators also used the final gallery to reveal problems and inequalities still experienced by many of South Australia's migrant and indigenous communities. A special focus was recent Indo-Chinese refugee arrivals. A picture of refugees aboard a fishing vessel was accompanied by the caption "Vietnamese refugees continue to risk their lives on small boats", pointing to the immediacy of this history. Other photographs showed Vietnamese families at migrant hostels, echoing the experiences of European DPs in the previous gallery, and groups of women learning English. A text panel, 'Problems and Prejudice', recognised the similar problems experienced by recent refugees such as language difficulties, homesickness and cultural isolation. It also pointed out that the open hostility and racist attitudes that Indo-Chinese refugees face have a long history in Australia. A photograph of anti-Asian graffiti, taken in the Adelaide suburb of Norwood in 1986, was evidence of this racism.[91]

This final gallery also offered curators the opportunity to return to the Indigenous story. A photograph of Aboriginal stockmen from the late 1970s illustrated their role as the "backbone of the pastoral economy", an analysis on the cutting edge of Aboriginal historiography.[92] Another photograph, this time of the first Aboriginal tent embassy in Canberra in 1972, represented the increasing political activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Exhibition text made mention of the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act of 1981 and the Maralinga Land Rights Act of 1984 as important results of the movement.[93] Curators wished to remind visitors of the ongoing legacy of the colonial past in the present, especially in the lives of Aboriginal people, and those of Aboriginal descent, who continued to be the most disadvantaged group in Australian society.

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[91] 'Problems and Prejudice' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

[92] Ann McGrath's important work on this topic, *Born in the cattle: aborigines in cattle country*, was published the year after the MMSA opened in 1987. It was based on her PhD, completed in 1983. See Ann McGrath, "We grew up on the stations: Europeans, aborigines and cattle in the Northern Territory," PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1983.

[93] 'Assimilation to Land Rights' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

Apart from these photo and text panels, Gallery 6 included computer databases, which were quite novel at the time. A brochure enticed visitors to "trace the listing of your national group on our computer terminals, and before you leave, be sure to register your place of origin on our map of the world".[94] Coloured pins soon adorned almost every country on the map, with many clustered around the most historically prominent point of emigration – Britain.

In the final text panels curators looked back on the 1980s and the marked shifts in immigration policy that had occurred, including the end of assisted passages and the end of differential treatment of 'British' and 'alien' non-citizens. During the decade most migrants arrived under the Independent and Concessional Family Scheme (later known as the Family Reunion Scheme), and a shift had occurred from recruiting unskilled labour towards a preference for professional qualifications, aided by the introduction of the Business Migration Scheme. Refugees came from not only Vietnam, but also Poland, Lebanon, Salvador, Chile, the Soviet Union, Iran, Timor, Africa, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Sri Lanka. In recognising the vast changes to Australian society as a result of recent migrations, curators suggested that multicultural policy could trigger the construction of a new national identity:

> *The idea that diversity of traditions strengthens and enriches Australia's cultural life became increasingly popular in the 1980s. Perhaps the 1990s will see multiculturalism as a key factor in the development of a new Australian identity.*[95]

Unlike the rest of the MMSA's galleries, which remained largely unchanged for fifteen years, Gallery 6 was reworked a number of times in the 1990s. As it represented the most recent historical period, new migrant groups needed to be added as the years passed, and the initial imbalance favouring the richer material culture of post-war migrants was slowly amended. It is important to recognise the challenges posed by such a recent history to curators in the 1980s. Most people willing to volunteer their objects and stories were European migrants who had been living in South Australia for at least twenty or thirty years. Making connections with more recent migrants, and

[94] Text for brochure, c1986, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 1.
[95] 'The 1990s' panel, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.

especially refugees, was much more difficult. As a result, their voices and personal stories were largely missing from the first iteration of the permanent galleries of the MMSA.

The constant reworking of Gallery 6 also allowed curators to address current issues. Visitor response boards were introduced in the mid-1990s, asking people to respond to questions like "What forms of racism or discrimination have you experienced?", "Should Australia increase its intake of refugees?", and "Who is an Australian?" The responses to these questions were vetted by museum staff to avoid deliberately offensive or silly remarks, and legitimate responses were then displayed on noticeboards in the gallery. Walsh says these boards were designed "to draw out not facts, not straightforward history but attitudes, emotions, opinions, memories, taking people's personal memories to become public memory".[96] One question on the response board demonstrates the open and frank approach of the MMSA staff. It said simply:

> *We have presented some of the key themes in immigration history. They were important to us. What ideas or themes would you present in this museum?*[97]

Visitor responses shaped future exhibitions, and helped curators to understand which parts of the current exhibitions had 'worked'. In 1997, during the rise of Pauline Hanson, visitors' responses began to show "a bit of racism creeping into the Museum".[98] Szekeres decided to combat the problem head-on with an exhibition about how anyone, anywhere, can become a refugee. This exhibition, *A Twist of Fate*, is examined in Chapter 5.

Temporary exhibitions

When the MMSA opened in 1986, Galleries 7, 8 and 9 were set aside as temporary exhibition spaces. In 1987 Margaret Anderson left the museum, and curator Viv

[96] Walsh, Interview.
[97] Visitor response board text, c1993, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 5/6.
[98] Szekeres, Interview.

Szekeres took over as director. Szekeres was at the time part of a federal committee which was examining how multiculturalism was presented in Australian museums, and during one of those committee meetings she had what she described as a "blinding flash of the obvious".[99] "Cultural diversity", she realised, "was extremely complex and layered, and if we were only presenting what you could see, [we] were doing the whole business a disservice".[100] After discussing this idea with her colleagues it was decided that they would develop temporary exhibitions which told the stories of several different cultural communities at the same time (cross-cultural exhibitions), as well as exhibitions that told the history of particular South Australian communities (generally ethno-specific exhibitions).

Kate Walsh also remembers this shift. She recalled: "initially multiculturalism was really only inclusive of immigrant ethnic communities". However, soon after her arrival at the MMSA in 1987, ideas began to change. In her words:

> Coming to a much more finely nuanced and complex understanding of cultural diversity allowed us to explore Australian society and people in a much more complex way, and it I think encouraged Australians who saw themselves as Australians to understand their own ethnic beginnings…[101]

Chapters in Childhood: Glimpses into the history of childhood in South Australia was a result of this new approach.[102] The exhibition development began with the Museum's third oral history project, where interviews collected by Beth Robertson as a part of the Jubilee 150 project 'SA Speaks' were combined with interviews of adult migrants by museum staff.[103] These were used in two different sections – the first explored children at work and at play during different historical periods. Experiences of the destitute children who inhabited the Museum's buildings in the nineteenth century, as well as Aboriginal children and child migrants were all explored. The second section consisted of six giant books, taller than the average visitor, whose pages could be

[99] Szekeres was a member of the Consultative Committee on Cultural Heritage in a Multicultural Australia. In 1991 they published *A Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity*, which is discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 157-158.
[100] Szekeres, Interview.
[101] Walsh, Interview.
[102] The exhibition was on display from 4 September 1987 to 31 January 1988.
[103] Szekeres, "The use of oral history in museum displays," 115.

turned to reveal the stories of South Australians from different cultures, most of whom migrated to the state as young children. Each story contained a map of their country of origin, family photographs, and an account of their childhood.

Physically, it was a fantastical and colourful exhibition. In the first gallery, a recreation of a toy shop window displayed a wide variety of objects on loan from other museums, libraries and individuals. They included German, Chinese, Russian, Scottish and Australian dolls, toy train engines, games, music boxes, lanterns, picture blocks, puzzles, and a tea set, all arranged on the shelves. [104] Aboriginal children's toys were also on loan from the South Australian Museum. In this large assortment, almost every visitor could find a toy they identified with.

The toy shop window was a clever introduction to more difficult histories, like those of child refugees and even contemporary Aboriginal children who still experienced the inter-generational impact of invasion and dispossession. These histories were represented by a rich collection of photographs including British migrants en-route from England to Australia, children waiting in DP camps after the Second World War, children playing in migrant hostels, refugee children from the war in Vietnam, and Aboriginal children with white female guardians.

In the same way that *The Changing Faces of Sydney* in 1984 featured seven migrant life stories exploring how migrants had shaped the city of Sydney, the 'giant books' section *Chapters in Childhood* focused on six stories of migrants to South Australia, limiting the chronology to their early years and first impressions of Australia. At the time of their interview, all were adults, and as Szekeres noted, they were often more comfortable talking about their early years than the more recent.[105] The displays tracked their memories, including stories told to them by parents, special celebrations, traditional foods cooked at special times, household chores and experiences of school. Overall the selection was predominantly female, European and a mix of refugees and 'free'

[104] List of items in the toy shop, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7.
[105] Szekeres, Interview.

migrants.[106] All those selected spoke a mother tongue other than English, and had cultural traditions and religions in contrast to the predominantly 'Anglo' and Protestant majority of white South Australians. Yet their experiences were vastly different. Some grew up in rural agricultural areas, others in bustling cities. Some children worked or did chores, others were more privileged and only had to study. Like the permanent exhibitions, class and gender were ways in which curators differentiated the experiences of migrants. An additional element of this section was the inclusion of a personal Cambodian story – in contrast to the first permanent galleries, where these more recent migrants were not well represented.

Strictly Black can be seen as the next step in the thematic cross-cultural display at the MMSA. It was on display from December 1988 until 24 September 1989, and advertised as "an exhibition about the social, economic and historical reasons for the wearing of black clothes".[107] It was not about the history of migration to Australia, but it did address issues of racism and challenge stereotypes about particular cultures. Cultural practices such as wearing the chador or burqua in Muslim societies were addressed, as were mourning rituals, body image, identity formation and advertising.

Elements of this exhibition were intriguing and novel, revealing culture as a process whereby traditions and their meanings can shift and change. The refusal of many Kampuchean settlers in South Australia to wear black was historicised by their experience of Pol Pot's terrible regime, where the black sampot became the uniform of exploited rural workers.[108] The changes to mourning rituals of migrant communities in Australia were tracked through time, revealing the abandonment of some "stricter mourning rituals" due to the pressures of assimilation.[109] Certain representations could

[106] The six stories were as follows: Ruth, born 1928, who grew up on a small farm in Estonia and had to leave at age twelve when Russia invaded; Elise, born 1912 and also Estonian, who grew up in the city and suffered a strict childhood; Ada Hamood, who migrated to Mt. Gambier from Lebanon in 1922 with her sister, brothers and mother to join her father who came in 1890; Dany, a Chinese girl from Cambodia who grew up in the Buddhist tradition and fled the country as an adult in 1975; Dacha, a Serbian Orthodox girl who grew up in suburban Adelaide; and Ivan, born in Prague in 1959 who came to Australia as a ten year old.
[107] Migration Museum, "Strictly Black, Education Resource for Students Years 6 – 12", 1988.
[108] 'Practical Black' panel, Strictly Black, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7.
[109] 'Traditions in Change' panel, Strictly Black, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7.

have been more nuanced, as the critiques of some commentators suggested.[110] For example, the black chador worn in many Muslim societies was accompanied by a map of the 'Muslim world' and an explanation of the different traditions of dress and purdah, and an explanation of how they relate to notions of class or status in those places.[111] Perhaps an exhibition about migration could have explored how the chador is negotiated in Western societies as well as in majority Muslim ones. Still, twenty five years ago this was not the media-hyped issue it is today.

On the whole, however, *Strictly Black* was an inventive and playful exhibition that broke down assumptions about unfamiliar cultures. The main messages were that diversity is to be celebrated, and that so-called 'Western culture' is not without its own cultural traditions (the wearing of black by Christian nuns and by young Adelaide 'goths' were both examples). While the choice of clothing and a single colour, black, may have led to some superficial analysis, it also posed new opportunities for the enthusiastic museum staff who were cutting their teeth on class-based, feminist histories. Kate Walsh speaks of it proudly:

> I don't think any other museum has done anything quite as interesting as that because we were able to explore the emotional attachment, community cultural rites of passage, and psychological stuff. It allowed all sorts of explorations and was absolutely stunning.[112]

The first two ethno-specific exhibitions at the MMSA were *Passengers from Hamburg*, which was about Germans in South Australia, and *Il Cammino Continua (The Continuing Journey): The Story of Italian South Australians*. *Passengers* brought one of the state's most significant pioneer communities into the museum, celebrating their 150th anniversary of settlement. Walsh remembers this as the first exhibition she worked on:

[110] Szekeres remembers that although the exhibition was hugely popular, some academics who visited felt the analysis was "fairly shallow." Szekeres, Interview.
[111] 'Hidden From Sight' and 'Map of Muslim world' panels, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7.
[112] Walsh, Interview.

> South Australia had always been diverse, and that was a good message to get across, but the wealth of material culture was lovely to be able to display... We were dealing with third, fourth generation on from that original immigration experience but the sense of connectedness to their family history and to their sense of place, the Barossa, the Adelaide Hills, Handorf and so forth was really key, and I thought it was a very interesting exhibition for that reason.[113]

The enthusiastic response from these communities ensured ongoing support for the museum, both in terms of donations, and a future visitor base. Curators decided the next ethno-specific exhibition had to focus on Italians, as they were the largest single ethnic group in Adelaide. However, unlike the Germans who had fairly centralised Lutheran archives, historical societies and small museums, the Italians were a much larger and more diverse group. As Walsh recalls, "the depth and breadth of the community consultation that we did to get that exhibition nuanced was the challenge and the fun."[114] Szekeres remembers that she began the consultation process at the top of the hierarchy, with the Italian Consul General. He provided her with a list of key people to talk to, and from there, the tree of contacts branched out until about eighty people across a number of Italian communities were involved. From these communities a consultative committee was formed which give advice to curators during the exhibition development process.[115]

The interviews conducted with different South Australian Italians teased out attitudes and ideals, unearthing the 'cultural baggage' that curators hoped to display alongside objects and images. Szekeres points out that these multiple viewpoints are hard to uncover when working with cultural groups, as "they could talk about the struggle [but] they could never talk about the internal rifts within their communities, they could never talk about the generational rifts, all of which we knew, but was never talked about". To try and gently broach these differences, a section of *Il Cammino Continua* addressed different ideas about the Italian family, gleaned through interviews. Szekeres explains:

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Walsh, Interview.
[115] Szekeres, Interview.

> We decided to have two parallel panels, and there were two photographs of women at work. One said "good women went out to work" and the other one said "good women stayed at home"... we were able to explain the Australian emphasis at that time [1950s-1970s], that you were a good wife and mother if you were home all the time, but the reality was that the women had to go out at four in the morning and do cleaning jobs or come home, make breakfast, put their children to bed at night and go out cleaning again, you know it was reality, they couldn't afford it![116]

Anna Malgorzewicz remembers *Il Cammino Continua* for the innovative practice of bilingual exhibition text. To mimic the process of settlement, where each generation speaks the mother tongue less, exhibition text in the first section was entirely in Italian. The second section was bilingual, and the final section was entirely in English. English-speaking visitors were provided with a printed guide sheet to help them negotiate the unfamiliar labels:

> *Parts of this exhibition are in Italian to give you a sense of being an immigrant. Not understanding the language of your new country can be frustrating and confusing. This guide will help you find your way.*[117]

As well as providing non-Italians with a taste of cultural dislocation, the exhibition aimed to dispel stereotypes. Szekeres said "we wanted to make a very significant point about the Italians, that they came from an ancient and rich culture, whereas here they were seen as labourers and builders".[118] To communicate this inheritance, objects were borrowed from the University of Adelaide's Museum of Classical Archaeology. Another message curators communicated was the diversity of the Italian community in South Australia. In Walsh's words:

> They never saw themselves as just Italians. They were Molfetasi, or from Campana, or they were Calabresi, or they were from Friuli or they associated their history and their culture with a region in Italy and very much continued that in South Australia, so we were presenting the richness of the culture and diversity and challenging the non-Italian South Australians' perception of the Italian community.[119]

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[116] Szekeres, Interview.
[117] Migration Museum, "Il Cammino Continua (The Continuing Journey): The Story of Italian South Australians at the Migration Museum, Education Resource for Primary School Students," c1990.
[118] Szekeres, Interview.
[119] Walsh, Interview.

Members of all these Italian communities came together for the opening of the exhibition, a huge festival over three nights, held under a marquee in the Museum's courtyard. Four Italian restaurants operated each night, serving hundreds of guests, and providing valuable exposure for the exhibition and the Museum at large. It was a rare occasion, one that Szekeres notes could never be replicated – "we couldn't do it now, they wouldn't let you – health and safety!"[120]

Conclusion: An influential agenda

The content of these first exhibitions of migration history at the MMSA must have been a breath of fresh air in the milieu of Australian museums. Previous depictions of migrants had tended to focus on famous and successful personalities, or those whose stories happened to be well documented.[121] What curators presented at the MMSA was a far less predictable and more inclusive story. It was also one that attempted to address national themes and ongoing social issues – Aboriginal disadvantage, refugee arrivals, migrant exploitation in the workforce, and the stereotyping of ethnic groups to the detriment of their diverse and valuable heritages, identities and traditions. Yet the change begun by the Museum was slow to catch on, and since then those who have written about migration museums have either discounted the importance of these early exhibitions, or remained completely unaware of them.

Reflecting on the state of Australian society after the 1988 Bicentenary, social critic Donald Horne mused:

> Some day there may be a museum of the rise and fall of the White Australia Policy; if there is such a museum there should be a section in it showing the kinds of stereotypes by which *The Bulletin* for eighty years engaged in its important national task of articulating race hatred in Australia.[122]

Of course, such a museum already existed in the MMSA. Horne was a long time supporter of the as yet unrealized National Museum of Australia and his comments articulated the need for a museum of Australian social history. He must have been

[120] Szekeres, Interview.
[121] This was the case in *The Changing Faces of Sydney* at Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1984. See Chapter 1, p. 77-82.
[122] Donald Horne, *Ideas for a nation*, Sydney: Pan Books, 1989, p. 185.

unaware of the content of the small museum on Kintore Avenue in Adelaide, which at the time was only three years old.

Horne's comments point to the necessarily limited initial impact of the MMSA on a national scale. We know that those individuals and communities who worked with the Museum in its early years often maintained the connection, contributing to later exhibitions and programs. As the reputation of the Museum solidified, it enjoyed an increase in public donations and a huge demand from groups to mount their own exhibitions in the community access gallery, the *Forum*.[123] Education became a priority (unsurprising given the background of the curators) and countless South Australian school children encountered their state's history through the Museum's exhibitions. But these impacts were on a geographically small scale, limited to those who either identified as migrants, were enticed to visit a migration museum, or who lived in Adelaide and its surrounds. While the MMSA clearly aimed their advertising at a broad audience, entreating the public to "Discover the immigrant in us all!", its community work was initially with post-war, predominantly NESB migrant communities. Ethnic minorities were then the first "constituents" of the MMSA, and characterised the image of the institution for much of the 1980s and 1990s.[124]

Nevertheless, the Museum's influence and impact on museological practices grew as museum professionals in other states visited exhibitions, exchanged ideas at conferences and published articles and exhibition reviews. As we will see in the following chapters, the initial exhibitions at the MMSA set agendas that were to influence similar museums and exhibitions for decades to come. The narrative of leavings, journeys, arrivals and settlings which structured each individual gallery was adopted as an overall thematic storyline for the Immigration Museum in Melbourne in 1998. Anna Malgorzewicz, who had her start in museums at the MMSA, was appointed director of this museum. Nissen hut recreations appeared in the Australian National

[123] After the first few years the list of communities who wanted to exhibit their histories in the gallery grew. They often had to wait two years for a space. Szekeres, Interview.
[124] "Constituents" is the term that curator Viv Szekeres uses to describe the communities that work with the museum, and help to create its Forum exhibitions. Szekeres, Interview.

Maritime Museum's *Tears, Fears and Cheers* exhibition and the Powerhouse Museum's *Australian Communities Gallery*. Personal stories and objects are of course the backbone of migration exhibitions, and the MMSA was the first to actively seek out and display these items. The shocking simplicity of The White Australia Walk remains as powerful today as it was nearly thirty years ago, and its influence is evident in the Immigration Museum's interview room in the exhibition *Getting In,* a 2003 addition to the permanent galleries. The practice of community consultation, oral history collecting and the allocation of a community gallery space were all pioneered with post-WWII migrant communities in South Australia, starting a movement that would eventually take off across the country in the next decade.[125]

[125] Anderson and Reeves, "Contested Identities: Museums and the Nation in Australia," p. 117.

3

Migration history and the Bicentenary

We are one, but we are many,
and from all the lands on Earth we come,
we share a dream and sing with one voice
– I am, you are, we are Australian.[1]

Australia's Bicentenary was the catalyst for many public expressions of nationhood, none more recognisable than Woodley and Newtown's popular and patriotic ballad "I am Australian". The song tells of the arrival of waves of immigrants and settlers, beginning with the "first Australian" who "came from the dreamtime", followed by a convict-turned-freeman, a "digger's" daughter, legendary bushranger Ned Kelly and celebrated Aboriginal painter Albert Namatjira. The song espoused the notion that all Australians, whether Aboriginal, British, immigrant or female have equal claim to the nation. It was deliberately confident and inclusive, but it could conversely be seen as palliative, given that Woodley penned the lyrics in the belief that Australians needed a national song they could sing proudly.

During 1988 these voices of consensus were constantly disrupted by a questioning of the very basis for the Bicentennial celebrations. Aboriginal protesters, academics, journalists and other Australians asked how, if at all, the 200th anniversary of British invasion should be marked. This challenge to the proud story of peaceful British colonisation and nation-building is now recognised as the most important legacy of the celebrations. As Peter Spearritt concluded at the end of 1988, "Australians have at

[1] Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton, "I am Australian" [music], North Ryde, NSW: Warner/Chappell Music Australia, 1987.

least been subjected to more sustained debate about the continent's history than ever before".[2]

The nation's museums were important sites for this debate. It is surprising, therefore, that with one notable exception exhibitions mounted in the Bicentenary year remain largely uncanvassed in the literature on museum history in Australia.[3] This chapter analyses two exhibitions, *Australian Communities* at the PHM in Sydney, and *Survival* at the NMA's temporary exhibition space in Canberra, both of which addressed Australian history through a narrative of migration. These exhibitions dealt with topics as diverse as recent refugee arrivals, the history of ethnic press in Australia and Aboriginal land rights. They are explored here in the context of the critique of the Australian Bicentennial Authority's (ABA) travelling exhibition, *The Great Australian Journey*, by historians David Goodman and Peter Cochrane. These bicentennial year exhibitions must also be considered in light of broader social and cultural changes, such as the growing movement in the Australian museum sector towards representing cultural diversity, a federal shift towards economic rationalism that threatened curators' autonomy in museums, and the evolving concept of Australian multiculturalism as articulated by the Hawke Labour Government. When seen in this context, important questions arise. For instance, did corporate sponsorship or government funding encourage a positive adoption of a 'nation of immigrants' narrative? Did exhibitions challenge or support the official version of multiculturalism? And how did curators negotiate the complexities and controversies of Australia's history of immigration during this year-long choreographed celebration?

[2] Peter Spearritt, "Celebration of a nation: The triumph of spectacle," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 91, 1988, 18.

[3] The exception is Peter Cochrane and David Goodman's article about the Australian Bicentennial Authority's travelling exhibition, "The Great Australian Journey: Cultural Logic and Nationalism in the Postmodern Era," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 91, 21-44. Andrea Witcomb also included a brief analysis of the Powerhouse Museum's 1988 exhibition *Australian Communities* in her 2009 article, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," 55-56.

***The Great Australian Journey*: sponsorship, tactical pluralism and national history**

The only exhibition from the Bicentenary year to generate a significant number of critical reviews was the ABA's touring exhibition, *The Great Australian Journey (TGAJ)*. This is hardly surprising, given the unprecedented level of Government funding and corporate sponsorship it attracted. Australian mining company BHP was the exhibition's official sponsor, gifting a massive $6 million. The ABA itself provided more than $24 million to the exhibition. This huge sum was justified as *TGAJ* was the single major event funded by the ABA to cater to those Australians living in regional areas.[4] In a financial climate where the country's government-funded museums were under increasing pressure to generate more of their own income, this expenditure on a temporary exhibition was lavish to say the least.[5] By contrast, government funding for the fledgling National Museum in the year 1987-88 totalled a meagre $2.563 million.[6] But regardless of the huge sums of money spent on *TGAJ*, for my purposes it is the content of the exhibition, its themes and its methods of communication that are important. This was the 'nation of immigrants' narrative on a national scale, with the official stamp of the ABA. What stories did it tell?

TGAJ consisted of six main exhibition themes, each displayed in a separate pavilion. These pavilions were tent-like structures that travelled across Australia's regional centres on huge trucks. When set up in a particular town, one small tent was set aside for the local community to mount its own historical exhibitions. The whole enterprise was thus more like a mobile mini-museum than a single exhibition, both in terms of scale and budget. The themed pavilions were called 'Australian Identity', 'Today', 'Journeys', 'Living Together', 'Environment' and 'Futures'. In the biggest tent a fifteen minute film called "Celebration of a Nation" was shown on two huge screens.

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[4] Spearritt, "Celebration of a nation," 14.

[5] Kylie Winkworth noted that "the 1988 federal budget directed Commonwealth institutions to adopt a more entrepreneurial approach to raising revenue from non-budget sources". Winkworth, "The Museum Inc: Public culture and the Sponsor," *Media Information Australia*, no. 53, August 1989, 67. The budget was informed by the Department of Finance's review of the museum sector, and is discussed later in this chapter. See Department of Finance, *What price heritage?: the Museums Review and the measurement of museum performance,* Canberra: Department of Finance, 1989.

[6] NMA, *Annual Report 1987/88*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989, p. 8.

Goodman and Cochrane note that the official construction of the Bicentenary celebrations by the ABA "entailed a shift in emphasis from the voyage of the First Fleet, to all voyages of arrival to Australia, to all the 'people who have settled this land over many thousands of years'".[7] This strategy was designed to overcome the uncomfortable anniversary of colonisation, to include Aboriginal Australians in the celebrations, and so to reassert the Bicentenary as an important, worthy and meaningful occasion for all Australians. The same approach was adopted by the curators of *TGAJ*, as the title suggests. The 'journey' theme worked on many levels – the exhibition's visitors were to take an exploratory journey though Australia's history, the exhibition itself went on a physical journey through the nation, and each pavilion explored a different thematic journey towards Australia today.

The 'Journeys' pavilion was, in Goodman and Cochrane's estimation, the "ideological heart of the Exhibition":

> One enters the exhibit up some steps between two sets of objects – on the left an Aboriginal canoe at the mouth of a sacred cave, and on the right a collection of artefacts from the First Fleet ship *Sirius*, followed by crates of shipboard passenger luggage. Encapsulated in that juxtaposition is one of the central arguments of the Exhibition, and some of its most important ideological work – reconstituted as fellow journeyers, immigrants all, black and white Australians can finally celebrate together. The work performed here is the erasure of difference, of time, and of power and domination.[8]

This pluralistic message was echoed in the film, 'Celebration of a Nation', which was an amalgam of archival and current footage of Australians at work, play, home, war, interspersed with stunning footage of the Australian landscape.[9] But the quick-paced editing of images would have left those unfamiliar with Australian history very confused, as there was no commentary. The only spoken dialogue occurred early in the film, where five Australians introduced themselves through their stories of migration. All but one were first-generation migrants, men and women from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The odd one out was a young man who joked that his ancestors

[7] Cochrane and Goodman, "The Great Australian Journey ," 26.
[8] Ibid, 27.
[9] Jumbuck Australia (producer), *Celebration of a nation* [videorecording], Brisbane, 1987.

would not have been very happy about their arrival, as they came as convicts. However, in the context of the others, he too is a migrant, even five or six generations on. These are happy migrant stories, and as Goodman and Cochrane observe, they emphasise the cultural elements (such as the salami sandwiches one man remembers he pleaded with his mum to replace for Vegemite ones) above other aspects. Food fits easily into the 'enrichment narrative' of migration, contributing to the core culture, but not truly transforming or threatening it. Interestingly, no Aboriginal voice is heard in the film, through many smiling Aboriginal faces are seen. Viewing the video today feels a lot like watching a tourism commercial – dazzlingly beautiful, uncomplicated and ahistorical.

The absence of commentary or narrative in the film was continued throughout the exhibition itself. In each pavilion, visitors were confronted with historical artefacts, contemporary objects and artworks devoid of curatorial labels. One pavilion housed the world's biggest shopping trolley – a comment on rampant consumerism lost on most visitors. Comic scenes of confusion and frustration ensued, as country-folk puzzled at the "rubbish" transported from the big-smoke and put on display for them to see.[10] A similar reaction was witnessed by social historian Peter Spearritt, leading him to declare the exhibition "roundly canned".[11] Peter Emmett, who was the senior curator of the exhibition, has since conceded that it was a failure, and explained how the experience informed his approach to his next two projects.[12] However, these two major projects for the Historic Houses Trust of NSW (the redevelopment of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1990 and the new Museum of Sydney in 1995), both attracted criticism for their lack of "purposeful historical analysis of historical material".[13]

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[10] Goodman and Cochrane, "The Great Australian Journey," 34.
[11] Spearritt, "Celebration of a nation," 14.
[12] Kate Gregory, "Art and Artifice: Peter Emmett's Curatorial Practice in the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney," *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2006, 5.
[13] Linda Young, quoted in Gregory, Ibid, p. 3. Gregory however defends Emmett's approach, arguing that his use of objects as art actually "brings history alive".

Clearly *TGAJ* was flawed in both theme and design, which was reflected in the criticism which came from both the right and left - that the exhibition was either 'too multicultural', 'too Aboriginal', or not 'proud' enough. In trying to appeal to everyone, it seems it appealed to no one, and in avoiding any educational or didactic overtone, or narrative, an overall message was indiscernible. Goodman and Cochrane call this phenomenon "tactical pluralism" – the inclusion of all perspectives without order or hierarchy.[14] This concept is useful when analysing exhibitions of migration history, and because it exemplifies it most thoroughly, *TGAJ* is a good point of comparison for other exhibitions in the Bicentenary year (and indeed in the years following). However, we must keep in mind that *TGAJ* was, in ex-PHM curator Kylie Winkworth's words, "arguably the most heavily supervised of any cultural project in Australia's history".[15] Multiculturalism and images of cultural diversity, harnessed under the safe theme of journeys, served a poorly-veiled political purpose: to unite Australians in the official celebration of a nation. The aims of the other exhibitions in this chapter were significantly different. They attempted (with varying degrees of success), to challenge, rather than confirm, the ABA's official line.

The Powerhouse Museum and *Australian Communities*

As we have seen, it was the entry of social history into Australia's state museums, combined with the government's recognition of the value of Australia's diverse cultural heritage, which provided the rationale behind the first exhibitions of migration. The MAAS was at the vanguard of this movement, with its exhibition *The Changing Faces of Sydney* at HPBM in 1984. Similar themes were planned for the opening of the Powerhouse Museum in 1988. As the flagship museum of the revamped MAAS, the PHM was the NSW Government's major cultural initiative for the Bicentenary. It was to be a new type of museum, one that would cater to all possible visitor groups. Entry would be absolutely free. As director Lindsay Sharp proudly said, "we don't want to be a museum just for educated adults. We're trying to be a museum that can compete with Australia's Wonderland or Luna Park".[16] The entire project,

[14] Goodman and Cochrane, "The Great Australian Journey," 33.
[15] Winkworth, "The Museum Inc," 69.
[16] Lindsay Sharp, quoted in Spearritt, "On Site and In Situ," p. 249.

which took almost a decade, cost around $93 million, $7 million of which was gifted by corporate sponsors.[17] The Museum hoped to attract a wide audience with the exhibition of people's history, familiar everyday items from the lives of working Australians past and present. On opening day, it was the Museum's collections of planes, trains and steam engines that stole the spotlight.[18]

Lost in the media flurry surrounding the Museum's grand opening in March 1988 was an exhibition called *Australian Communities*, which was part of the umbrella theme 'Everyday Life in Australia'. However, after just a few months complaints were received over the use of the term "invasion" for British colonisation, thrusting the exhibition onto the front pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In the context of Australia's Bicentenary, and in the heart of the first city, the PHM was perfectly situated in the eye of the ideological storm over notions of Australia's past.

How did this controversial exhibition come about? Credit here must be given to the exhibition's curators. Kimberley Webber, who had played a large part in the *Changing Faces of Sydney* and other exhibits at HPBM, curated the empire, migrant hostel and opening community focus areas of *Australian Communities*, and initiated a project with St Brigid's Marrickville that recorded children's experiences of migration.[19] Ann Stephen re-joined the MAAS in 1985 to work on the Powerhouse exhibition, '...*never done' women's work in the home* which was strongly influenced by the feminist politics of the time.[20] Stephen, along with Peter McKenzie, developed the majority of the

[17] Winkworth, "The Museum Inc," 71.

[18] The press coverage of the Museum's opening in March 1988 centred around this fun-park atmosphere, noting the wonder audiences experienced when viewing the Museum's big exhibits – the State's first steam engine, the Strasbourg Clock, and a Catalina flying boat "suspended from the ceiling by a single wire rope". See, for example, Catherine Osborne, "Full Power Ahead," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1988, p. 2; Joseph Glascott, "Our New Museum Is 'One Of The Best'," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1988, p. 7; Peter Roberts, "Powerhouse Museum Is In The Big League," *Australian Financial Review*, 15 April 1988, p. 14.

[19] Efforts were made to contact Kimberley Webber and interview her for this thesis, but were unsuccessful.

[20] Stephen had previously been contracted by the museum to work on the trade union banners section of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1983-4. Ann Stephen, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 24 May 2010, Sydney, Australia.

Indigenous components.[21] Louise Douglas undertook much of the oral history work, curated some of the migration section and wrote the *Australian Communities* brochure. Other staff who were involved in the exhibition include Vicki Northey, Peter Cox, Ann Shearman and Charles Pickett.[22] Like their counterparts at the MMSA, these curators were interested in the new social history, in topics like social justice, women's stories and Aboriginal Australians' experiences. They were part of the same professional networks and organisations and similarly trained in history and education.[23] Additionally, they were equipped with a larger budget and longer timeframe to research and develop exhibitions about Australia's social history. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the opportunity to examine the 'everyday life of Australians' was harnessed as a way to challenge mainstream stereotypes about what it meant to be Australian. An early label brief for the exhibition states "we hope to challenge those visitors who see Australia as a land of 'white anglo-saxon protestants' and to encourage an interest in the rich diversity of Australian life and culture".[24] Curators agreed that most people would have some appreciation of Australia as a multicultural country, but also noted that those understandings may be limited to common visible expressions of ethnic groups such as food, folk dance and costume. They wished to expose visitors to the more complex process of migration, as well as the "impact of European settlement on the original inhabitants" and the "value of cultures that non-British migrants have brought with them". [25]

From this perspective a critical interpretation of Australia's history emerged. According to Andrea Witcomb, who included a brief analysis of *Australian Communities* in a 2009 article about the NMA, the interesting thing about the exhibition was the assertion

[21] Their research was later included in a publication of the Sydney History Group. See Peter McKenzie and Ann Stephen, "La Perouse: an urban Aboriginal community," in Max Kelly (ed), *Sydney: city of suburbs*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press in association with the Sydney History Group, 1987, pp. 172-191.
[22] Peter McKenzie, Vicki Northey, Ann Shearman, Ann Stephen and Kimberley Webber, "Australian Communities Label Brief," c1988, MRS 204, Office files, File 6300, PHM; Stephen, Interview.
[23] In the late 1980s historians formed a special interest group of the Museums Association. Margaret Anderson was part of this group, and recalls it "did much to promote new social history approaches to museum history and instigated some of the first discussions about the research potential of material culture". Anderson, "Museums, history and the creation of memory: 1970-2008."
[24] McKenzie et al, "Australian Communities Label Brief," MRS204, PHM.
[25] Ibid.

that "there had always been an element of cultural diversity to Australian society. Thus, the settlers were called migrants, Irish and Anglo settlers were pointed to as well as the Chinese, Italians, Greeks and Germans".[26] Witcomb saw the inclusion of the British as migrants as an important "point of departure" from the "previous celebratory model in which ethnicity was not something that marked the dominant Anglo-Celtic majority".[27] In fact, as we have seen, this was also the strategy of curators at the MMSA in Adelaide, who were developing exhibitions from as early as 1983. Many elements of *Australian Communities* can be seen as a continuation of the work begun by the MMSA curators, and some elements were directly replicated. Where the exhibition departed from the model set by the MMSA was in its inclusion of post-settlement Indigenous history as a counterpoint to migration history. As the floor plan of the exhibition demonstrates, seven of the fourteen segments of the exhibition dealt with Indigenous history, with a focus on one urban Indigenous community at La Perouse in Sydney.

[26] Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," 56.
[27] Ibid.

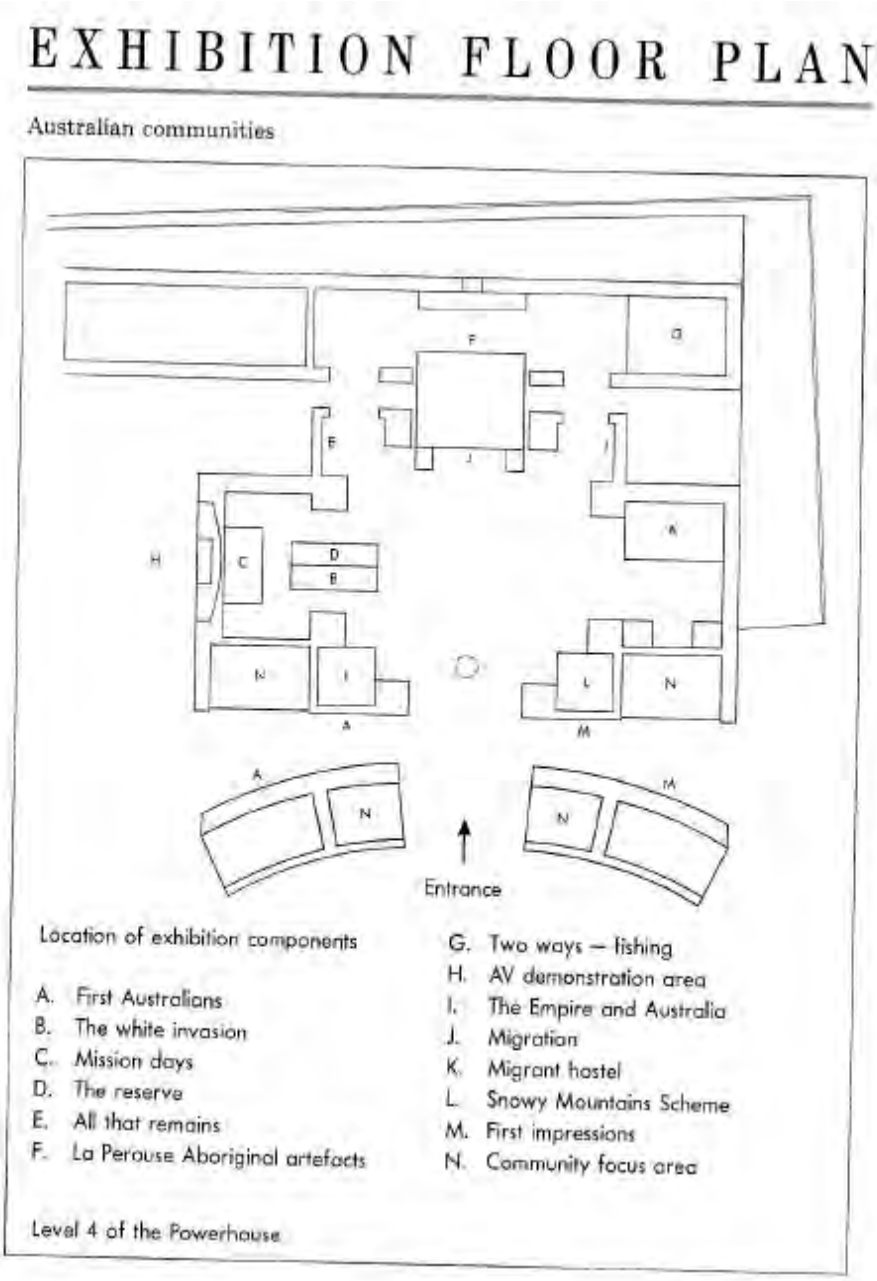

Figure 4: Floorplan of the Australian Communities exhibition, from *Who is an Australian?: school visit package*, Haymarket, NSW: Powerhouse Museum, 1989, p. 45.

Curator Ann Stephen and the Museum's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Peter McKenzie, worked together on the Indigenous sections. Stephen had been an active participant in Aboriginal political struggles of the 1970s, and was familiar with members of the Aboriginal community at La Perouse in Sydney's south-east. She suggested to the other curators that a focus on the urban Indigenous community at "La Pa", as it was known

to locals, would work well.[28] The eventual section on La Perouse included a history of the area. Sited on the shores of Botany Bay, it is a deeply significant place for the history of Indigenous and European contact. As the exhibition text read, "it was here in 1788 that Aborigines first confronted the European invasion".[29] McKenzie and Stephen conducted extensive archival research and oral history interviews with the residents of La Perouse, which resulted in a richly textured exhibition of life in the area for over a hundred years.[30] Part of their research involved a project with children from La Perouse Primary School. Pictures the children drew of their version of Australian history were displayed in the exhibitions, some of which depicted Cook's 1770 landing and the subsequent waves of white settlers intruding upon Aboriginal land.[31] In this section and throughout the exhibition, Stephen, McKenzie and the rest of the curatorial team decided to pursue this interpretation of British colonisation as an "invasion". In a similar way to curators at the Constitutional Museum, TMAG and the MMSA before them, they were engaged in a rewriting of Australian history that sought to uncover the impact of British colonisation on Aboriginal people and its ongoing social and political implications, 200 years after first contact.

These re-evaluations were not to everyone's liking, especially in the new political climate of New South Wales. The PHM had previously enjoyed the support of the Wran and later the Unsworth Labor government, who as Stephen remembers, "wanted to do new types of history".[32] But in the same month that the PHM opened, a new government took office under the Liberal leadership of Premier Nick Greiner. Controversy about 'new' interpretations of history, already in full swing as a result of the Bicentenary celebrations, soon spread to the Museum. The issue came to a head after a complaint from a member of the public about the use of the term 'invasion' was forwarded to the Museum by the Minister of the Arts, Peter Collins. The Museum reacted swiftly by calling a meeting of the Board of Trustees, who, despite some

[28] Stephen, Interview.
[29] 'La Perouse' Label 6D.01, "Australian Communities Labels," 2 binders, last updated 13 May 1993, PHM.
[30] See McKenzie and Stephen, "La Perouse: An Urban Indigenous Community."
[31] 'Before the invasion' Label 2C.02, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[32] Stephen, Interview. The Wran Government was in office from 1976 to 1986, followed by the Unsworth Government from 1986 to 1988.

dissent, recommended that all references to 'invasion' in *Australian Communities* be removed. The hubbub hit the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on June 21 1988, with the headline "Why The Museum Said Yes, Minister".[33] Acting Director Margaret Coaldrake said the decision was "in the best interests of 95 per cent of the public". However, academics, PHM staff and even some board members expressed their indignation at such a decision. A board member who asked to be unidentified told the *Herald* "If it were white people whose society was overturned, we would have called it an invasion". Historian Max Kelly defended the curators, insisting that "the museum is a force for education, not just strolling around". Peter McKenzie remarked "for the Powerhouse museum to react in this manner to one objection makes you wonder what's going on".[34] In the same vein, an unidentified "group of employees in a State Government department" cheekily suggested an appropriate word to replace the "invasion" was "Collinisation".[35] Insinuations that Peter Collins had anything to do with the board's decision were vehemently denied by his press secretary the following day.[36] Nevertheless, the controversy and the Board's snap decision reflected the high level of anxiety in the public debate surrounding the politics of the Bicentenary, and the contested role of the PHM as a site for public history.

Thankfully for the future integrity of the infant institution, the decision to change the original *Australian Communities* exhibit was reversed as quickly as it was made. The day after the story hit the papers, Coaldrake announced that "in the interests of informed public debate", the references to "invasion" would remain.[37] Instead, a disclaimer panel was added to the original exhibit to clarify the intended meaning of "invasion". Rather than "to enter with hostile intent", it was defined as "the act of entrance, as if to take possession or overrun". This definition was seemingly less controversial, as it did not apportion blame, but simply conveyed the British intention to possess the land.

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[33] "Why The Museum Said Yes, Minister," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1988, p. 1.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "Column 8," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1988, p. 1.
[36] David McKnight, "Hold it, museum! 'Invasion' is in again," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1988, p. 2.
[37] Ibid.

However, the curators also took the opportunity to address a deeper issue underpinning the whole "invasion" debacle. The rest of the panel read:

> *As the evidence is reconsidered and as opinions change, so history is rewritten. This exhibition challenges you to reconsider the evidence about the white colonization of Australia.*
> *Your answers may not be the same as many history books. What has changed … the facts or the way you interpret them?*[38] (original emphasis).

That people might have to confront the uncomfortable idea that history is not straightforward, but instead dependant on perspective, was of course exactly what curators hoped would happen. The wording of the new "invasion" panel specifically addressed those Australians who learned a different history at school – people who Coaldrake initially worried would "find it hard to understand that there might have been a change of attitude to white settlement in Australia".[39] Yet the exhibition's reinterpretations were not limited to the story of discovery and settlement, but also the 200 years of "progress" and nation-building that followed. It was in effect an alternate version of Australian history, highlighting the constancy of migration, immigration restriction and discrimination on the basis of race. Visitors were also confronted with a challenge to the 'happy migrant' story, and to the larger narrative of a peaceful, prosperous and fair nation.

As we have seen, at the MMSA in 1986, traditional historical narratives were disrupted by a focus on class and gender within the broader timeline of South Australian history, and concepts such as 'cultural baggage' were used to expose the commonality of the migrant experience across time. At the PHM, in the smaller space of *Australian Communities*, a 'snapshots' approach was adopted. Australia's migration history was exhibited in five case studies or segments: an exploration of the relationship between Australia and Empire; an overview of migration policy and different ethnic groups through a timeline and interactive database; a recreation of a migrant hostel bedroom; a display on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, in which many DPs were involved; and a display about contemporary children's first impressions of Australia. An

[38] 'What sort of invasion?' panel, installed 23 June 1988, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[39] "Why The Museum Said Yes, Minister," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1988, p. 1.

additional element was the display of four community histories, which were rotated periodically throughout the life of the exhibition.

Each of these exhibition segments focused on and challenged a particular assumption or perceived truth. For instance, the display on Empire questioned the cultural and political homogeneity of Australia before the Second World War. It was divided into two sections, "those for" the Empire and "those against", and was accompanied by a display of symbols of Empire including medals, books, souvenirs of Queen Victoria's long reign, and mementoes of Empire Day celebrations in Australia. "Those for" Empire acknowledged the shared historical and cultural ties between the two nations, such as Australia's service in wars supporting Britain as far back as the Boer War. Ideas of Britain as "home" were then contrasted with the views of "those against". These were contemporary and historical examples of opposition to Empire. For example:

> *Since 1788 Aborigines have resisted the British invasion. From the 1800s Irish Australians maintained vocal opposition to the British rule.*
> *The human cost of World War I and the 1930s depression led more people to question the high price of loyalty to the empire.*
> *"Australia first, the Empire second" became a popular slogan. The Labor premier of NSW, Jack Lang, was opposed to dependence on Britain.*[40]

School groups were asked to find someone represented in the exhibition who might not have valued the British keepsakes on display, and consider why.[41] Thus the exhibition text, objects and education activities all reflected a pluralistic view of history, not just an 'overturning' of a previous narrative.

The migrant hostel recreation was also used to explore contrasting and contradictory experiences. The small bedroom recreation, strikingly similar to that exhibited at the MMSA in Adelaide two years earlier, was modelled on Villawood hostel in Sydney and used original corrugated iron from the site.[42] The memories of Mrs Jainina Roberts, a Polish DP who arrived at Villawood in 1949, were contrasted with the story of the

[40] 'Empire' Label No. 4C.17, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[41] PHM, *Who is an Australian?: school visit package*, Haymarket, NSW: Powerhouse Museum, 1989.
[42] Louise Douglas with Nigel Parbury, *Australian Communities*, Ultimo, NSW: Powerhouse Museum, 1991.

Gardner family from Scotland, who arrived in Sydney in 1956 and initially stayed at the Bunnerong Migrant Hostel. Visitors could watch an audio-visual program of the Gardner family photographs while listening to recordings made on their disc-cutting machine intended for family and friends back home. Mrs Roberts lived at Villawood Hostel for six years and worked at the kitchen there. Her experiences of the cramped room, which she shared with her two daughters, and her enforced separation from her husband, who had to work on a government project elsewhere, provided a sobering counterpoint to the Gardners' happier and more comfortable story. These personal snapshots were contextualised by a panel about the Department of Immigration's advertising campaigns in the post-war period, which showed how the idealised images of Australia as a land of opportunity were often very different from the reality encountered by newly-arrived migrants. Excerpts from newsreels and documentaries of 1950s and 1960s featuring the assimilation of migrants were also screened. One was the Department of Immigration's 1954 documentary "Together We Build", which showed migrants from many different European countries working together harmoniously on the Snowy Mountains Scheme.[43]

This video linked in thematically to the display opposite, an exploration of the Snowy Mountains Scheme through personal memories of male migrants, set in the context of Australia's post-war immigration program and labour needs. Oral histories undertaken by Museum staff with people who worked on the scheme were the basis of this segment, and their personal objects illustrated their stories.[44] The label brief for the exhibition outlined the twin concepts of the component: "That work on the SMS was a common experience for male migrants upon arrival in Australia" and "That despite the difficulties and hardships, and their varied ethnic origins, the workers on the projects developed a strong community spirit".[45] Unlike the other critical segments of the exhibition, this interpretation seemed to echo the spin on the project by the

[43] The other two films were 'Migrants learn to be Australian citizens, from 'Australian diary' (newsreel), 1951, 4 mins, and 'Arriving in Australia', Department of Immigration, 1963, 3.5 minutes. 'Bunnerong Migrant Hostel' Section, Label 5c.10, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.

[44] MAAS, Snowy Mountains Scheme interview list, MRS 278 Oral history interviews, c1983-. Some of the interviews were aired on ABS Radio's program "Talking History". The museum later developed this subject into a major exhibition called *Snowy! Power of a Nation* in 1995.

[45] McKenzie et al, "Australian Communities Label Brief," MRS 204, PHM.

Department of Immigration in the 1950s. Although there were stories of hardship, loneliness, cultural dislocation and family separation on the Scheme, these were not highlighted. The camaraderie of workers was the key theme of the display, inadvertently assimilating the European post-war workforce into the celebrated masculine Australian ethos of 'mateship'.

Opposite a historical display about the 'First Australians' was one called 'First Impressions', which again contrasted the Indigenous with the immigrant experience. This section was the result of a project undertaken at St Brigid's Primary School in Marrickville in 1986. Marrickville was a traditional 'Anglo' working class suburb in Sydney's inner west that became the hub of the Greek community in the 1950s. From the late 1970s the suburb's character again changed with the arrival and settlement of Vietnamese refugees. By the 1980s Marrickville was a highly diverse and visibly multicultural area.[46] The Vietnamese children's first impressions of Australia featured in this segment were both amusing and disturbing. Some commented on Australians' strange "yellow hair" and others remembered racist verbal abuse: "Sometimes when we go out people call us names because we look different from them. We felt hurt and very sad".[47] Like the stories of Aboriginal children from La Perouse Public School, these accounts were in the children's own words and illustrated by their drawings and personal objects. The use of children's perspectives made the exhibition perfectly suited to school groups, for whom an education kit was developed.[48] By using the voices of children it also broached uncomfortable topics for adults in a non-threatening fashion. A similar technique had been used in *Chapters in Childhood* at the MMSA the previous year.[49]

A timeline tracking changing migration policy, from the invasion of 1788 to the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act, was an important addition to these various spotlights. It

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[46] Chris Meader, "Marrickville," in *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2008, http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/marrickville.
[47] 'First Impressions' Label No.2D.02, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[48] Powerhouse Museum, *Who is an Australian?: school visit package*, Haymarket, NSW: Powerhouse Museum, 1989.
[49] See Chapter 2, p. 111-113.

included graphics such as cartoons from *The Bulletin* in the 1880s, showing the "racist attitudes of the time", and government advertising such as the 'Bring out a Briton' campaign in the 1960s. The timeline ended with the 1976 passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights bill and the arrival of the first Vietnamese "boat people". Unlike the MMSA, an envisioned multicultural national identity was not seen as the endpoint of Australia's migration history. The PHM timeline emphasised federal immigration legislation rather than multicultural policy. A focus on the campaign against racial discrimination, illustrated by a photograph of Whitlam's Minister for Immigration Al Grassby at a rally in 1974, united both the indigenous and immigrant segments of the exhibition.[50]

The only interactive components of the exhibition were a number of computer databases which invited visitors to "Play the migration game".[51] This game, which was really a database of information, included statistics defining all of Australia's main ethnic groups, their time of arrival and place of origin. Like at the MMSA, these databases allowed visitors to access more information on groups in which they were interested, most likely those with which they identified personally.

Apart from the five permanent sections, the *Australian Communities* exhibition was also designed to showcase a number of community-focus displays on a rotating basis. The four opening displays were *Worth living: postwar Jewish refugees in NSW* (the story of a group of Jewish refugees who came to Sydney on the ship *Johan de Witt* in 1947); *Hard work, long hours: Greek settlers in Australia* (produced in association with the Australian Hellenic Historical Society); *A new life and freedom: Latin Americans in Sydney*; and a section on the social history of the Ultimo/Pyrmont area, which focused more on working class history than migration but referenced the Irish and Chinese as prominent groups.[52] Translated panels in Yiddish, Greek and Spanish were part of these displays. Unlike the *Forum* gallery at the MMSA, these small exhibits were actively curated by Museum staff, working in consultation with community groups.

[50] 'Timeline Migration to Australia' section, Label 6H.01, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[51] 'Migration Game' Label 4A.38, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[52] Multiple community-focus labels, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.

They appeared to visitors as part of the fabric of the overall exhibition, not as a separate community contribution. The advantage of this was that the stories related to elements of the permanent exhibition. This label from the opening Greek exhibition confronted the idea of Australia as the happy, welcoming nation that was suggested in post-war Department of Immigration literature:

> *In country towns, Greek people had to face isolation and racism. "Always our name was dago. They didn't like us at all. Always they were cursing at us because we couldn't speak English."*
> *For one café owner the racism has left "a memory, very hard to overcome in later years. Although I made friends, Australian friends".*[53]

When asked if the objective to challenge audiences was achieved in *Australian Communities*, curator Ann Stephen pointed out that the variety of community focus exhibitions meant that meanings were constantly in flux:

> I think it was a provocative exhibition... I think some of these changing showcases were more successful than others, I think some were a bit clichéd and ordinary, some were richer.[54]

It is important to remember that these changing elements - whether an exhibition about Filipino maids, the commodification of Pacific Islander images in the West, or the role of the Native Mounted Police on the frontier - added layers of meaning to the permanent display.[55] A visitor's experience of *Australian Communities* would differ considerably depending on what community histories were on display.

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[53] 'Racism' Label 3A.10, "Australian Communities Labels," PHM.
[54] Stephen, Interview.
[55] A community focus exhibition of two Filipina artists' work called *Signed, sealed and delivered* was displayed from October 1989 to October 1990. A display about the Native Mounted Police was also added in 1990. It had been produced with the assistance of historian David Huggonson and funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission ("Australian Communities Labels," PHM). Ann Stephen later curated an exhibition of 'South Sea native' postcards and photographs that were sold commercially in Australia at the turn of the century. Called *South Pacific Stories*, it was on display from September 1993 until October 1994. Two related publications are Ann Stephen (ed), *Pirating the Pacific: images of travel, trade and tourism*, Haymarket, NSW: Powerhouse Publishing 1993, and Ann Stephen, "South Pacific Stories: a photo essay," *Meanjin*, v. 53, no. 4, Summer 1994, 679-688.

Writing in 1991, former director of the MMSA Margaret Anderson reflected on the "rude health" of museums in Australia.[56] In light of the opening of numerous new museums such as the Australian National Maritime Museum and the PHM, and soaring visitor numbers, Anderson thought it was important to examine what history was told in museums. She identified a worrying trend towards conservatism in the major museums, noting the popularity of science and technological exhibits - topics preferred by corporate sponsors as they proved "safer" than more critical themes. Anderson singled out the PHM, where a sponsorship program that raised approximately $7 million was hailed as a great success, despite concerns raised by museum staff about the involvement of corporations in the content and presentation of exhibitions. *Australian Communities*, along with *never done... women's work in the home*, the Powerhouse's exhibition about unpaid women's work, were identified by Anderson as examples of social history that was both "searching and successful". However, in her estimation:

> ...both their size and their location, in each case tucked under the stairs and somewhat out of the way, prevent their having much impact on the real focus of this museum, which remains the affirmation of technological achievement.[57]

Anderson's comments draw our attention to the marginalised position of migrant, women's and indigenous histories in Australian museums in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, *Australian Communities* managed to present an important and complex look at Australian history in a comparatively small space. Curator Ann Stephen is proud that it was the only gallery in the museum that was mounted without a corporate sponsor. She made the link between sponsorship and content clear:

> ...we were successful in arguing that *Australian Communities* would be the one area that didn't have to be sponsored because it might have material in it that was inappropriate for sponsorship, and so that always seemed to me quite a significant achievement.[58]

[56] Anderson, "Selling the Past," 130.
[57] Ibid, 135.
[58] Stephen, Interview.

If only by its presence in the PHM, and the education programme that was based around it, this exhibition put migration history on the radar of thousands of museum visitors.[59] In Australia's largest city, and one of the most diverse, the lack of a migration museum meant that exhibitions like *Australian Communities* took on a disproportionate importance.

Survival **at the National Museum of Australia**

At the same time that the PHM was opening, the NMA was valiantly struggling on in temporary buildings at Yarramundi Reach in Canberra. Their only exhibition space – the Visitor Centre - had held only one previous exhibition.[60] Suggestions for a new exhibition theme included 'We Are a Nation – things that join us together and keep us apart', 'Australian Sport in the 1950s', and 'Getting the Message (Communication in Australia)'. Yet the proposal the NMA Council agreed to develop was perhaps the most topical, and the one that would best suit the Museum's tripartite remit - Australia since 1788, Aboriginal Australia and Environment. It also fitted the curators' selection criteria for a new exhibition, including the need for "immediate impact" for 80% or more of visitors and accessibility to visitors of different age groups, cultural backgrounds and educational levels.[61] It was called *Survival*, and opened on the 24th of June, 1988.[62] The exhibition's design proposal stated: "In keeping with its theme 'survival' this exhibition should be visually and conceptually challenging for the large numbers of visitors anticipated during the Bicentennial year"[63]. From these high

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[59] The Powerhouse's education programs attracted 98 721 students in their first year of operation (MAAS *Annual Report 1988/89*, p. 61). The year that the *Who is an Australian?* school visit package was developed for the Australian Communities exhibition, 109, 136 students visited the Museum (MAAS *Annual Report 1989/90*, p. 41).

[60] *On the Horizon,* which opened in July 1986, was the first exhibition showcasing the museum's collections. National Museum of Australia, *Annual Report 1987/88*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988, pp. 41-42.

[61] Anon, "Possible criteria in determining the suitability of the exhibition theme, tabled at meeting of interested staff," 16 January 1987, NMA Administrative File 86/575 Exhibitions - 'Survival' second exhibition at Yarramundi.

[62] Staff who worked on this exhibition included Jennifer Hoff (Exhibition co-ordinator), Sally Fletcher (Acting Curator, Department of Australian Social History), Marg Alexander (Senior Conservator), Julia Findlay and David Kaus (Curatorial Assistant Gallery of Aboriginal Australia), Gaye Sculthorpe (Curator, Gallery of Aboriginal Australia) and later Kim Ackerman (Curator, Gallery of Aboriginal Australia). NMA Administrative File 86/575.

[63] NMA, "Design Proposal for Exhibition, Yarramundi Visitor Centre," no date, NMA Administrative File 86/575 Exhibitions - 'Survival' second exhibition at Yarramundi. This document was distributed to five design firms for expressions of interest, and tenders were received in response from March 1988.

aspirations, it is clear that the museum wished to present its audience with a critical interpretation of Australian history, without 'forcing it' upon them. This compromise, between communicating a chosen interpretation and leaving the visitor to draw their own conclusions (which of course they inadvertently always do!), led *Survival* to encounter some similar problems to the ABA's touring exhibition *The Great Australian Journey*.

Survival comprised ten separate units or displays. Arranged in a roughly circular flow, these were, in order, a traditional English-style Christmas dinner scene; a Chinese Lion Dance display; a family of three grey kangaroos (stuffed and displayed in front of a golf course backdrop); a unit about the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra accompanied by a video "We have survived" of the Aboriginal Protest March on Australia Day, 1988; a display about migrant survival focusing on non-British European communities; a display of a Hungarian national dress handmade in Australia in 1973; a range of traditional and contemporary Tiwi artefacts (called 'Continuity and Change'); a section on Aboriginal trade; and finally a display called 'Migrant Mementoes'.[64]

Curators described the chosen theme of "Survival" in the 1987/88 *Annual Report*:

> The central theme of the exhibition is intended to demonstrate continuity and adaptation of the traditions and cultures of the Aborigines, British and non Anglo-Celtic migrant settlers, and some species of Australian fauna at a time of rapid change and dislocation.[65]

To "survive" implies a threat, conflict, trauma or some sort of crisis that has been overcome. Yet conflict, whether cultural, environmental or political was conspicuously absent from the displays. Whether from a deliberate choice to avoid controversy, or a failure to locate the exhibit's units in a broader historical context, this silence about what circumstances had actually been 'survived' smacked of the same tactical pluralism Cochrane and Goodman identified in the official Bicentenary exhibit. That

[64] Morgyn Phillips, "Analysis of Survival", essay, c. 1988, NMA Administrative File 88/526 Exhibitions - 'Survival' second exhibition at Yarramundi; "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions," 1 June 1988, NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[65] NMA, *Annual Report 1987/88*, p. 44.

said, the curators of *Survival* could not be accused of alienating their audience. They provided their visitors with much more information and narrative than was given at *TGAJ*. The provenance and history of objects were explained through their labels, and some important contextualising events in Australia's history were highlighted.

Visitors first confronted the idea of cultural survival with the display of a traditional English Christmas dinner and table setting, complete with roast turkey and plum pudding. This recreation, set at an unspecified time in Australia's history, was accompanied by nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian Christmas cards, as well as images from the Coles-Myer Archives of Christmas shop window displays and celebrations.[66] The exhibition text read "in the past the traditional English Christmas provided a tangible link with 'Home', in what seemed a harsh, uncivilized environment".[67] Much like the section on Empire in *Australian Communities* at the PHM, this display attempted to reposition 'mainstream' Australians as descendants of just another ethnic group. The survival of English Christmas traditions provided a familiar yet unexpected entry point into the exhibition.

In the 'migrant survival', 'migrant mementoes', and Hungarian dress units, visitors were presented with objects from the museum's growing ethnic heritage collection, including trade union leaflets, ethnic newspapers, copies of plays produced by ethnic communities and a range of handiworks. An area exploring the foreign language press in Australia contended that its history was "almost as long as that of immigration itself", citing the publication of the *German Australian Post* in South Australia as early as 1848.[68] The post-1948 boom in foreign language publications was well illustrated, with the exhibition text making a clear distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" immigrants:

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[66] Ibid, p. 45.
[67] 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[68] 'Foreign Language Press' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526.

> *'Voluntary immigrants', mainly those from Southern Europe, tended to concentrate on providing Australian news, and information useful to migrants. The newspapers produced by 'involuntary' immigrants, such as refugees and Displaced Persons, tended to be more concerned with international events and news from home.* [69]

One visitor was provoked to write to the Museum, concerned that the exhibition's representation of the foreign press had omitted the early publication of newspapers by the Australian Irish community, which he noted were of a generally anti-English tone. He also objected to what he saw as a stereotypical dichotomy between the "early British settlers" and the later "non-British immigrants", pointing out that there was considerable diversity among those called "British settlers" in Australia. The response of Acting Curator Jenny Bell reveals some of the challenges the curatorial team faced. She contested the apparent dichotomy, pointing to the inclusion of Croatian and Chinese communities who were well established in Australia before the Second World War, but did admit that "we are certainly guilty of using the shorthand term 'British' to encompass the English, Irish and Scots and their diverse cultures, and should probably be more careful in our choice of words in the future".[70] Whether or not this response was to merely placate the correspondent, it again points to a change in the way that museums approached multiculturalism. The shift from the idea of multicultural heritage as belonging to NESB people, towards a much more nuanced interpretation of British Australians also as ethnic, as migrants, and as culturally diverse, can be seen as a response to the white backlash against multiculturalism that ebbed and flowed throughout from the mid-1980s onwards.[71] At the same time as the narrative of migration became adopted as a national narrative, the expectation that museums such as the NMA should represent the ethnic backgrounds of all Australians became more and more difficult to fulfil. As Bell explained to the visitor, "in a display area as small as ours, there is little room for the nuances and complexities of the past. It is our

[69] Ibid.
[70] Jenny Bell, Acting Curator, Department of Australian Social History, Letter to Mr Richard Reid, 3 July 1989, NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[71] This backlash became more pronounced in the late 1990s, as Part 2 of this thesis demonstrates.

intention, however, to address stereotypes and to present historically accurate information in a way that is stimulating and entertaining for our audience".[72]

What Bell did not reveal was that Irish political history was absent from the exhibition not because of a deliberate omission or ignorance, but because collections to tell the story did not exist.[73] However, the political history of other non-Anglo communities in Australia was better documented. The Croatian community of Broken Hill maintained their political engagement with events back home through the Federation of Yugoslav Immigrants in Australia, the first Australia-wide association of any ethnic group. The exhibition text stated:

> *Although their decision to emigrate, and much of their activity here was politically motivated, these people did not live in the past. Their political interests and beliefs embraced Australian conditions, as well as contributing to the survival of Croatian cultural identity.*[74]

The handwritten original of the constitution for the Progressive Federation of Yugoslav Immigrants in Australia (*Ustav i pravila*), written in 1929, illustrated this history, which motioned to the early collecting priorities of the ethnic heritage consultants at the NMA at the time.

Curiously, despite displaying fascinating cultural material, such as stage props and plays written by members of the Polish Folklore Theatre formed in Melbourne in 1935, the bigger picture of mass immigration and government policy was not explained in *Survival*. The exhibition text noted:

> *Although it had been popular its last performance was in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1961. Support appears to have dwindled as the Polish community settled into Australian life.*[75]

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[72] Bell to Reid, 3 July 1989, NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[73] Cook and Zubrzycki, *Migrant heritage: a guide to the collections*, p. 14. See also earlier discussion, Chapter 1, pp. 69-71.
[74] 'Alagich Material – Political Aspirations' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[75] 'Cultural and Social Activities' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526.

The suggestion that these practices ended as the community "settled into" Australian life implied that their assimilation rendered their cultural practices no longer necessary. Surely this was not the intended message. Yet how the expectations of assimilation affected these communities, or the aspirations of their Australian-born children, was not explored.

A unit on Chinese Australians featured a lion costume which was used earlier in the year at the opening of the Chinese Garden at Darling Harbour, Sydney.[76] The costume and accompanying material, including percussion instruments, Buddha masks and banners were lent to the museum by Choy Lee Fut Martial Arts Federation of Sydney, who also performed the dance at the opening of the exhibition. This cultural display would be familiar to many visitors to the museum. Less familiar would be the long history of Chinese communities in Australia, their important role in the country's economy or the changes wrought by the White Australia policy. Some of these were acknowledged in the exhibition text, but not illustrated by the objects and stories chosen.[77] Instead, the focus was contemporary, and limited to the particular group that lent the material.

Morgyn Phillips, who was employed at the NMA at the time, suggested that the contradictions between the written text and the "visual text" (the combination of objects and graphics) were the main failing of *Survival*. Writing in 1988, she observed:

> The written text of the exhibition refers to cultural survival "despite considerable pressure to adapt to a 'British' lifestyle". There is little or no visual reference in the displays to this considerable... Some of these pressures are gestured to visually, in the form of photographs, in the introductory panel but there is no explanation of the particular images and their relationship to a social or political context.[78]

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[76] The Chinese Garden was opened on 9 January 1988. See NMA, *Annual Report 1987/88*, p. 45.

[77] ' Immigration' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526. The text included:
"The White Australia Policy, introduced in 1901, consolidated colonial restrictions on Chinese entry and prohibited the permanent settlement of all non-Europeans. Although it was not officially abolished until 1973 substantial communities of Pacific Islanders, Japanese, Chinese, Indians and Afghans survived in Australia."

[78] Phillips, "Analysis of Survival," NMA Administrative File 88/526, p. 5.

This confusion seems to imply that the cultural survival of Australians of British descent has been dependant on the cultural destruction of others, yet the material on display (the Christmas dinner) was nostalgic and celebratory. The one component of the exhibition that did attempt to address uncomfortable histories was the unit on the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. This included a stylised representation of the tent itself, in front of a backdrop of Parliament House, with an original sign from 1972 that read "We want land rights, right now", and an Aboriginal flag. A video of Aboriginal protests at the Sydney Bicentenary celebrations earlier that year indicated the continued struggle that Aboriginal Australians must wage in order to assert their survival and rights. However, like the other spotlights, the potential for this display to transform visitors' understandings about the circumstances that led to Aboriginal protests (such as policies of protection, assimilation and child removal) were absent. Here Goodman and Cochrane's critique of the ABA exhibition, that it "did not provide the conceptual tools for dealing with its own warnings", are equally appropriate.[79] The lack of a clear chronology or timeline was a fundamental oversight, as the mix of historical eras in *Survival* hampered any overall message.

In the process of trying to be inclusive of all groups, curators and designers slipped into the very stereotypes they wished to challenge. The separate 'units' technique seemed to exacerbate the problem. The acting curator said at the time, "the Survival exhibition did not aim to tell the story of immigration to Australia, but of the continuation and adaptation of cultural traditions in changed circumstances; immigration is a big part of this story, however, and had to be addressed."[80] I acknowledge that any comparison of a temporary exhibition such as *Survival* with an entire museum devoted to immigration such as the MMSA would be inappropriate. However the very decision of the NMA in 1988 to present migration history as a story of cultural survival, and to position British or Anglo-Celtic Australians as an 'ethnic' group (albeit the dominant one), demands our attention. The 'nation of immigrants' narrative, when set against the political struggles and cultural traditions of Australia's Indigenous peoples, dredges up an underlying tension in the nation's history, one with which *Survival* was unable to

[79] Goodman and Cochrane, "The Great Australian Journey," 44.
[80] Bell to Reid, 3 July 1989, NMA Administrative File 88/526.

come to terms. Unlike the PHM's *Australian Communities*, or the MMSA's chronological galleries, words like "invasion", "colonisation" and "Empire" were absent from the exhibition's labels. Instead, the colonizers were "settlers" and later arrivals were "newcomers" or "migrants".[81] All contributed to the nation's celebrated cultural diversity, a diversity which "survived" from pre-contact times to the present day.

Conclusion: New responsibilities

Survival and *Australian Communities* were not unprecedented in the Australian museum scene in 1988. As we've seen, *Australian Communities* pursued many of the same themes and displays that the MMSA exhibited in 1986. Likewise, the migrant sections of *Survival* were the result of a number of years collecting work by consultants Jerzy Zubrzycki and Egon F. Kunz, and before that, the statement in the NMA's 1982 Charter that "the museum will reflect the developing nation of Australia in all its cultural diversity".[82] The movement for Australia's museums to become more representative was gathering momentum in the late 1980s, and the official rhetoric of the Bicentenary (as exemplified in the ABA's travelling exhibition) added grist to the mill by championing multiculturalism as the triumphant face of modern Australia. However, the official version of the 'nation of immigrants' story was miles away from the complex and contested history of colonisation and immigration that Australian museums were grappling with.

The momentum for change was encapsulated at a conference for museums, libraries, archives and historical collections held in Melbourne in November 1988. Oral historian Morag Loh welcomed the participants to "New Responsibilities: Documenting Multicultural Australia" with the hope that they would "encourage a movement, already underway, to make our historical collections more representative of all of Australia's people".[83] Staff from new ethno-specific museums such as the Jewish Museum of Australia, older local museums such as the Polish Hill River Church Museum and major institutions such as the State Library of Victoria all presented

[81] 'Introduction' Panel, "Survival Final Exhibition Text and Captions", NMA Administrative File 88/526.
[82] See Zubrzycki, "Ethnic Heritage in a Multicultural Australia," p. 35.
[83] Birtley and McQueen (eds), *New responsibilities: documenting multicultural Australia,* p. 1.

papers explaining how their organisations were exploring Australia's diverse heritage and history. However, underlying the enthusiasm and vigour of these presentations was a common anxiety that the movement would be short-lived. Many worried about the ability of small museums to garner support in an increasingly difficult economic environment, and there was a considerable fear that the fledgling initiatives that gained funding under the Bicentenary and other State birthdays might languish in the 1990s and beyond.

They had good reason to be concerned. A ministerial review of Commonwealth-funded museums and galleries established in 1986 appeared to condemn museums to shrinking budgets for years to come. The approach of the Department of Finance, outlined in their 1989 report *What Price Heritage*, was to attempt to "define" and "demystify" Australia's cultural heritage in order to get better value for money from the institutions that store, research and exhibit it. By putting a price on heritage, the Department questioned the legitimacy of museums and other cultural heritage institutions to remain "special" beneficiaries of Government funding. They also argued that the function of Commonwealth institutions should meet the demands of the public, requiring "a more consumer oriented approach to museum management".[84] Despite the opposing view of the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories (DASETT), who released their own discussion paper based on the review's findings in 1990, sharply titled *What Value Heritage*, the economically rationalist recommendations of the Finance Department had already won the ear of government.[85] One telling sign was the decision in the federal budget of 1989 to postpone the development of the new NMA building for five years, and to disperse national collections for display in existing institutions.[86]

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[84] Department of Finance, *What price heritage?: the Museums Review and the measurement of museum performance*, Canberra: Department of Finance, 1989, p. 23.

[85] DASETT argued that the value of museums and other cultural institutions cannot be easily quantified, and pointed out that some of the vital functions of these institutions, such as research, had been ignored by the Department of Finance. See Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment Tourism and Territories, *What value heritage?: a perspective on the Museums Review and the performance of museums,* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, Discussion paper, 1990.

[86] Department of Finance, *What price heritage?,* p. 12. For discussion on how this impacted the collecting practices and future exhibitions of the NMA, see McShane, "Museology and public policy."

With these worrying trends emerging, museum workers sought security for their future collecting and exhibition activities. One-off blockbuster exhibitions like *TGAJ* had little transformative effect on the status of multicultural heritage in Australia's cultural institutions. What the museum and gallery workers at the *New Responsibilities* conference wanted was a long-term commitment on the part of the Commonwealth Government to recognise the cultural heritage of all Australians, and to fund cultural institutions accordingly. This demand was recognised in principle by the Hawke Government's 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, which included as a goal of multiculturalism the need for Australia's institutions to "acknowledge, reflect and respond to the cultural diversity of the Australian community".[87] However, the nature of this reflection remained in the hands of museum curators, boards, and directors, and their ability to secure funding from a variety of sources.

The crux of the problem, in the view of MMSA Director Viv Szekeres, was a pressure on museums to attract more visitors and generate revenue through light, entertaining exhibitions. But the nature of Australian immigration history, both in terms of the impact it had on Aboriginal people and the personal experiences of cultural dislocation and trauma experienced by migrants, was anything but 'light'. She argued passionately that "this subject matter cannot and should not be packaged for visitor comfort and appeal". Of the over 170,000 visitors that came to MMSA in the year 1987/88, Szekeres said:

> ...our visitors do not emerge happy. Mostly they're discomforted and often quite angry. They say things like, 'We just had no idea'. It seems to me that museums must continue to present displays which enable people to identify their own experiences and see them given recognition.[88]

The objects and stories that Szekeres at the MMSA, Stephen and her colleagues at the PHM and the curators at the NMA were interested in collecting, interpreting and exhibiting both complicated and confirmed aspects of the 'nation of immigrants' story. As we have seen, this tension troubled exhibitions like *Survival*, and politicised

[87] Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of Multicultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing Our Future*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989, p. 1.
[88] Szekeres, "The problems of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage," p. 78.

exhibitions like *Australian Communities*. In exhibitions about Australia's migration history, the comforting and patriotic message that "we are one, but we are many" was quickly destabilized by the evidence that diversity was not always celebrated.

4

Towards a new model

In the 1990s more museums than ever before were collecting, exhibiting and researching material that documented Australia's multicultural heritage. As Margaret Anderson and Andrew Reeves observed in 1994, the drive for museums to be seen as "culturally diverse" in both their exhibitions and programs, particularly community ones, was actually changing the public culture of museums across the country and overseas.[1] Yet the extent to which that change was transformative, rather than superficial, was questionable. The critical edge that had characterised the first exhibitions of social history barely a decade before was becoming harder to find. Government funding for museums was increasingly tenuous, and dependent upon the ability of state institutions to generate more of their own revenue.[2] After the surprise Commonwealth investment in the National Maritime Museum project at Darling Harbour, rather than the struggling National Museum of Australia in Canberra, Anderson warned:

> ...as the Hawke brand of consensual politics treads ever more economically rationalist paths, it seems likely that the potentially radical and critical brief of the Museum of Australia will be edged further into the political wilderness, while the safer, more romantic exhibitions proposed for the National Maritime Museum will continue to strike a chord of political sympathy.[3]

So how did new exhibitions of migration history fare in this political and economic climate? The three contrasting exhibitions analysed in this chapter provide a window through which to assess a changing narrative of migration. First, the permanent gallery *Passengers* is described and situated within the opening of the National Maritime Museum (ANMM) in 1991. Second, a joint exhibition between Museum Victoria, the Italian Historical Society and the Jewish Museum of Australia called *Bridging Two*

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[1] Anderson and Reeves, "Museums and the Nation in Australia," pp. 117-118.
[2] Department of Finance, *What price heritage?: the Museums Review and the measurement of museum performance,* Canberra: Deptartment of Finance, 1989, p. 12.
[3] Anderson, "Selling the Past," 144.

Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton from 1992 is examined. And last, a 1995 touring exhibition funded primarily by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) for the UNESCO International Year of Tolerance is assessed and placed within the uncertain climate of the National Museum of Australia. This exhibition was called, aptly, *Tolerance*. The circumstances of the museums in which these exhibitions were developed, and the policies and initiatives introduced by the Commonwealth Government, including the Heritage Collections Reports of 1991-1993 and Australia's first national cultural policy 'Creative Nation' in 1994, are important as the frames through which we can better understand the myriad decisions made when planning and executing an exhibition. Surveying both policies and outcomes, I argue that the early to mid 1990s was a transition period for migration history in museums, one where the focus began to change from the representation of particular groups, to an avoidance of "multicultural" displays and an emphasis on similarities across groups. In government documents and in museum exhibitions, a shift from the language of "multiculturalism" to one of "cultural diversity" is one signifier this change. The three exhibitions examined here can be seen to inhabit a middling ground between the invention of the 'nation of immigrants' narrative, and the overt democratisation of the narrative later in the decade.

From the margins to the core: reflecting Australia's cultural diversity

By the 1990s a great deal of public confusion surrounded the meanings of multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and the nature of national identity in Australia. The popular definition of multiculturalism was, in James Jupp's words, "most unpromising". He elaborated:

> One central problem of multiculturalism has, indeed, been its popular definition as unconcerned with either Aborigines or 'mainstream' Australians. It has run the risk of being ghettoised as only of interest to immigrants. As they will die out and their children will be Australianised, it is assumed that multiculturalism is at the margin. It is there to placate the ethnic lobby and the ethnic vote.[4]

[4] James Jupp, "Australian Culture – Multicultural, Aboriginal, or just plain Australian?," *Artlink*, vol. 11, no. 1&2, 1990, 12.

Museums were among the first cultural institutions to engage critically with the concept of multiculturalism through Australia's history of migration, yet only a small number had done so and with varying degrees of success. While some new museums had struck out and begun innovative programs and exhibitions, many still had their heads stuck firmly in the sand. Overall, as Jupp suggested, migration history remained on the margins of mainstream institutions.

Following Hawke's 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* a federal consultative committee was formed to devise a plan to make the country's museums, galleries and libraries more representative of the cultural traditions of all Australians. The membership of the Consultative Committee appointed by the then Minister for the Arts, Tourism and Territories comprised of the leading figures in museums at the time, many of whom had been involved in the new museums of the 1980s. Among them were Morag Loh from the State Library of Victoria, who had opened the *New Responsibilities* conference in 1988; Viv Szekeres, director of the MMSA in Adelaide; Dr Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, a curator, historian and director of the Italian Historical Society, Victoria; and Dr Des Griffin, who was then Chairperson of the Council of Australian Museum Directors and Director of the Australian Museum.[5] The report they produced, the *Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity* (hereafter *The Plan*), insisted the activities of all public cultural institutions must be relevant to the people they serve – both current and future generations, and in order to do so, it argued that the attitudes and perceptions of the employees of

[5] The other members of the committee were Ms Sophy Athan from the State Library of South Australia; Mrs Kaye Dal Bon, Director, National Museum of Australia; Ms Gwenda Davey, author and lecturer on Folklife Studies, Victoria; Dr Sneja Gunew, Senior Lecturer, Literary Studies, Deakin University, Victoria; Mr Graham Hinton, Director, Fairfield City Museum Village, New South Wales; Mr Warren Horton, Director-General, National Library of Australia; Dr Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, curator and historian, Italian Historical Society, Victoria; Mr James Ramsay, Deputy Principal, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; Mr Daniel Thomas AM, immediate past chairperson of the Council of Australian Art Museum Directors, Director Emeritus, Art Gallery of South Australia; and Mr Des Stephens from the State Library of Queensland. Mr Les Neilson, who was the Assistant Secretary of the Cultural Heritage Branch of DASETT, was the chairperson.

those organisations had to change.[6] The aim was to "redefine the Australian consciousness" to include those groups previously seen as marginal.[7] It was an audacious attempt to move multiculturalism, more palatably branded as 'cultural diversity', to the mainstream.

John Thompson of the National Library of Australia has argued the significance of *The Plan* was more symbolic than practical, as the recommendations it made for cultural institutions to more effectively represent cultural diversity in their collections contained little incentive for cooperation or repercussions for noncompliance.[8] Although the initial impact of *The Plan* may have been limited, it did contribute to the increasing public and political pressure on museums to engage with "culturally diverse", or non-mainstream communities (or in Szekeres' words, to change "beyond the token gesture").[9] Anderson described this as a "shift in relative power, from the museum to the community".[10] The growth in Indigenous politics, bolstered by government support for a national reconciliation movement, also contributed to this change. The introduction of equality and access statements, community spaces and liaison officers in many libraries, galleries and museums were all responses to the new demands and expectations. For example, a nationwide survey of museums and galleries across Australia in 1993 found that of 74 institutions contacted, 26 had written community access exhibition policies, and many others were considering them.[11]

One practical way that museums could capitalize on the push to represent more Australians was by targeting migrant communities as a new audience base. In 1994

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[6] Consultative Committee on Cultural Heritage in a Multicultural Australia, *A plan for cultural heritage institutions to reflect Australia's cultural diversity*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991, p. 13. This change of attitudes was envisaged as being a long term process and led to the publication of a cross-cultural training curriculum for heritage workers by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. See Galla, *Training as Access*.

[7] *A plan for cultural heritage institutions to reflect Australia's cultural diversity*, p. 20.

[8] John Thompson, "Cultural Diversity in Australia," *National Library of Australia Staff Papers*, 1996, http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/nlasp/article/view/987/1257.

[9] Szekeres, "The problem of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage," p. 79.

[10] Anderson, "The Changing Museum," p. 306.

[11] Madeleine Galbraith, "Community Access Exhibition Venue Listing," *Museum National*, vo. 2, no. 3, October 1993, 10-12.

Jana Vytrhlik presented a paper at the Museums Australia conference discussing the results of a cultural diversity visitor study co-funded by the PHM and the Australia Council. She observed that in her eight years of working as a multicultural liaison officer at the Museum, there had been an "important transformation of values about 'others'":

> ...from the past view of 'here comes an ethnic, here comes a problem' to the present view of 'oh, the ethnic doesn't come - and that's a problem'. The PHM now wants to know why 'they' are not coming in order to actively encourage the participation of culturally diverse communities.[12]

When she was first employed by the PHM in 1986 Vytrhlik remembered that most migrant communities she invited to work with the Museum "had never heard about the Powerhouse Museum and did not know what contribution I was talking about". Yet by the 1990s the tables had turned, and "communities, particularly from the second generation of migrants with more security and education, were making demands".[13] Likewise, oral historian Janis Wilton has argued that the accounts of grown children of post-war migrants in this period began to challenge the success stories told by their parents. In memoirs, poetry, autobiography and in some exhibitions the second generation began to assert different, more complex histories of cultural displacement and inter-generational tension.[14] As demand for representation grew and diversified, some museums began to enter into joint agreements with community organisations to conserve, store or display their cultural heritage.[15] Plans for immigration museums in Melbourne and Sydney drew support.[16] What was in the 1980s an unfamiliar and novel concept was by the mid-1990s a political plus and tourist drawcard. A 1993 study into the feasibility of an immigration museum in Sydney noted that:

> ...the build-up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics and the increasing emphasis that is planned by the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games on our cultural diversity... will, combined with the strong growth of cultural tourism, mean that tourist agencies and authorities will want to be able to direct local

[12] Vytrylik, "Cultural Diversity: From an Experiment to Research Study," p. 321.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Janis Wilton, 1994, quoted in Thomson, "Moving Stories," p. 29.
[15] Museum Victoria's cultural agreements are addressed later in this chapter.
[16] Feasibility studies were undertaken in Sydney in 1994 and in Melbourne in 1995.

> and overseas visitors to a place that can reveal the uniqueness of Australian society in profound yet entertaining ways.[17]

So it was not only the demands of migrant communities and government-endorsed guidelines that propelled culturally diverse exhibitions in the 1990s, but also the potential for those exhibitions to showcase and promote the success of multicultural Australia to the world. This economic incentive was linked to a number of larger social changes, including the rise of Sydney as a global city, with a growing dependence on the tourism, leisure and entertainment market.[18] This was a market in which public museums had to compete.

Another important federal report that reveals changing ideas in relation to immigration history in museums was commissioned by the Cultural Ministers Council in 1990. The working group for the project, called 'Heritage Collections in Australia' (HCA), was led by Des Griffin. Margaret Anderson, the first director of the MMSA, and Peter Spearritt, who had consulted for MAAS social history exhibitions in the late 1980s, were contracted to "examine the nature and extent of heritage collections in Australia and to assess access to them".[19] The project produced three reports between 1991 and 1993, primarily authored by Anderson, based on an extensive survey of collections relating to Australian history in over 200 museums.[20] It found that in the great majority of Australia's museums (most of which were local and regional), heritage was still understood in terms of a jingoistic pioneer narrative devoid of historical complexity or conflict, much the same as when Pigott surveyed them in

[17] Kinhill Group, "Interim Feasibility Study into the Establishment of a Museum of Immigration, report to the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs and the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW," 1994, p. 6. Document courtesy Ann Curthoys.

[18] On the question of whether and when Sydney became a "global city" see Maurice T. Daly and Bill Pritchard, "Sydney: Australia's Financial and Corporate Capital," in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 168-172.

[19] Margaret Anderson, *Heritage Collections in Australia: report*, [Vol. 1, Stage 1], Melbourne: National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, 1991, p. 12.

[20] Anderson appears as the sole author of Volume 1. Volume 2 was written with the assistance of Annette Shiel and Deborah Tout-Smith, and Tout-Smith also co-authored Volume 3.

1975.[21] HCA echoed *The Plan* of 1991 in pointing out that even in major museums where calls for representative collecting had been voiced for some years, there was still resistance:

> Many museums accept the theoretical significance of representative collecting, but do little in practice. Awareness in some areas is low. The museum profession needs to raise the profile of these issues and to devise specific strategies to address them to ensure that the entire community can find its culture and its past in museums in the future.[22]

While the overall number of items in historical collections was alarmingly low, those that did exist were located across Federal, State, Territory and local collecting institutions. In the final report released by the Heritage Collections Working Group, the members suggested that together, these items constituted a "Distributed National Collection" of "moveable cultural heritage". To make this national collection accessible to all Australians, they called for funding to create a national database and conserve existing items.[23] Material in the collection was envisaged as becoming "comprehensive in relation to Australian material in all its cultural diversity; and selective in relation to material of the rest of the world". Australia's history of immigration featured in what the working group defined as "Australian material", for instance, "objects made in Australia", "objects used in Australia", and "objects brought to Australia by immigrants".[24]

Considered together, the *Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity* and the *Heritage Collections in Australia* reports reveal the gradual institutionalisation of culturally diverse collecting practices in Australian museums in the early 1990s. They also demonstrate the increasing importance of 'access' and the idea that the primary function of museums was to serve the community. As the HCA so

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[21] The authors argue that these museums presented an "idealised past" which encouraged the belief that "life was in many ways 'better', certainly 'simpler' in 'the past', when families were large and happy, children polite and respectful, women stayed at home and found fulfilment caring for husbands and children and everyone worked hard and was grateful for what they had". Anderson and Tout-Smith, *Heritage Collections in Australia: report,* Vol. 3, p. 30.
[22] Anderson, *Heritage Collections in Australia: report*, Vol. 1, p. 5.
[23] Australia, Cultural Ministers' Council and the Heritage Collections Working Group, *Heritage Collections in Australia: a plan for a new partnership*, Canberra: The Council, p. 1.
[24] Ibid p. 21.

clearly stated – a "national collection" can only exist if it is accessible to all members of the nation. A national museum, first legislated in 1980, was envisaged as the heart of any such collection.

Keating, new technologies and the Distributed National Collection

However, the NMA did not fare well in this period, and, as we will see, this uncertainty affected the collection of material relating to Australia's migrant heritage. Hawke had supported the development and opening of a national museum by the Centenary of Federation in 2001.[25] But after the leadership challenge of December 1991, a fresh Labor Government under Prime Minister Paul Keating began to reassess the cultural needs of the Australian public, and although economic policy dominated the first years of this new government, the promotion of the arts to the national stage was a marked change from past practice. The release in April 1992 of a discussion paper titled *The Role of the Commonwealth in Australia's Cultural Development* by the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories (DASET) began the process whereby a national cultural policy could for the first time be introduced.[26] Writing in the June 1992 edition of *Museum National*, curator Kylie Winkworth noted DASET appeared to have taken on board some of the issues flagged in the first volume of Anderson's *Report on Heritage Collections in Australia* for the HCA Working Group.[27] She also asked whether the "renewed search for national identity under Paul Keating's Government [means] a more secure future for the National Museum?"[28]

A promise by the Keating government of $26 million over four years for the development of the NMA, announced barely a fortnight before the 1993 Federal election, buoyed hopes for the eventual realisation of the museum. The re-elected Labor Government's 1993 budget was also encouraging. As well as funding the

[25] Craddock Morton, "The National Museum of Australia: have we got the museum we deserve?," *reCollections*, vol. 3, no. 2, October 2008: http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_3_no_2/notes_and_comments/the_national_museum_of_australia/.
[26] Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories, *The role of the Commonwealth in Australia's cultural development: a discussion paper*, Canberra: DASET, 1992.
[27] Kylie Winkworth, "Commonwealth Policy on Culture," *Museum National*, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1992, 6.
[28] Ibid.

development and implementation of the 'Distributed National Collection' concept developed by the HCA Working Group, the budget allocated $3 million for a detailed design and documentation of Stage I of the National Museum at its Yarramundi site. A further boon was $6 million to start a national travelling exhibition program, 'Visions of Australia'. However, the budget qualified the promised $26 million for the NMA as conditional on the support of the ACT Government, which were required to cover the remaining $60 million estimated cost, with the help of the private sector. Still, the overall consensus was cautiously optimistic. Former NMA director Don McMichael called for the museum community to "do whatever we can to encourage our private sector contacts to back this nationally significant museum". He reminded them that "all museums will benefit from its realisation".[29]

Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy was launched by Keating on 18 October 1994 - more than four years after the HCA Working Group was first established, fourteen years after the NMA was legislated and almost twenty years after the landmark Pigott Report into Australian museums. However, for staff and supporters of the NMA, the policy was a disappointment. Ironically, the major setback was the concept of access, combined with the appropriation of the concept of the 'Distributed National Collection' and the emphasis on new media technology. In a curious comparison the report argued:

> We have to embrace [the information revolution] as we embraced the cultural diversity which post-war immigration delivered to us, recognising that we can turn the remarkable power of this new technology to a democratic and creative cultural purpose.[30]

With the emphasis on the potential of the internet and the need to democratise knowledge, the idea of a virtual museum became more attractive than the financial commitment to construct a new building in Canberra. The Government chose instead to develop only the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, while the NMA would:

> ...continue to provide Australians with a range of static and travelling exhibitions and education programs including CD based multi-media and

[29] Don McMichael, "Best budget in years...," *Museum National*, vol. 2, no. 3, October 1993, 21.
[30] Department of Communications and the Arts, *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994, p. 7.

> broadband services. The Museum aims to reach the majority of its users through audio-visual media, telecommunications technology, publications and the popular media. [31]

Journalist Angela Bennie noted in *The Age* that despite this new spin, "the silence on [the Government's] previous commitment to build a national museum in the federal capital was thunderous."[32] Des Griffin argued that no amount of multimedia and new technologies could make up for this shortfall. His reaction typified the exasperation of many in the museum community:

> No matter how sophisticated your electronic systems or your CD-ROMS, there are some experiences you cannot replace. Virtual reality cannot possibly replace the experience of the real thing, of going to a museum and discovering things.[33]

Kylie Winkworth linked the need for actual rather than virtual museums to the demands of communities whom they serve:

> Communities want museums for many reasons, most of which are less about information and more to do with celebrating place, identities and experiences which they wish to communicate and keep.[34]

These comments go to the heart of the shift in power between museums and communities in the 1990s. Griffin's emphasis on the power of the "real thing", the tangible past, pre-empts what later researchers would confirm – that Australians trust museums to tell stories of the past because of the perceived truth of the real object.[35] The act of visiting a museum is part of this experience. Despite the trend in some museums in this period to display objects in less didactic, more postmodern ways, such as at the Museum of Sydney in 1995, the removal of the object from its historical context and story left many museum visitors frustrated and confused. Critics of this approach argued that it obscured history for the sake of design.[36] While Winkworth was certainly right in suggesting that communities want museums for purposes other

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[31] Ibid, p. 76.
[32] Angela Bennie, "More To Museum Than Meets The eye," *Age*, 29 November 1994, p. 20.
[33] Des Griffin, quoted in Bennie, Ibid.
[34] Kylie Winkworth, "Taking it to the streets: museums and communities," *Museum National*, vol. 3, no. 2, September 1994, p. 4.
[35] Ashton and Hamilton, *History at the Crossroads*, p. 78.
[36] For an overview of the critiques of the Museum of Sydney, see Gregory, "Art and Artifice: Peter Emmett's Curatorial Practice in the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney."

than providing information, this fundamental function is what has traditionally lent museums legitimacy as state institutions. Curators at the MMSA in Adelaide recognised that the power of museums as state institutions was central to their appeal to migrant communities. A community's decision to exhibit their history in such a museum, rather than in a community hall, reflected their wish to be recognised as an important part of the nation's heritage. It was also an opportunity to share their stories with the broader Australian community. Winkworth's comments demonstrate this need for communities to assert their identities and sense of belonging in museum spaces, be they local, state, or national. Although new technologies could engage more people, they could not substitute for this space – both physical exhibition space, and space in the national story.

One small but significant event in 1992 demonstrated this need. In that year, representatives from the Baltic Council of South Australia approached the MMSA with a request to erect a permanent memorial to honour the memories of thousands killed in their homelands under Soviet rule. They had a plaque dedicated years earlier, in 1959, at a suburban football oval, but they wanted a more central and appropriate location.[37] The plaque that was unveiled on an external wall of the MMSA in June 1992 marked the beginning of a new role for the institution. Current director of the MMSA, Christine Finnimore, has reflected:

> The overwhelming need for a community that carries a burden of grief is to discharge that grief by making their history known. They need to bear witness to what they have experienced.[38]

Dozens of plaques now surround the original one from the Baltic Communities Council, on what the museum has called the 'Memorial Wall'. They demonstrate the importance of official and mediated commemorative sites to remember and communicate the grief, trauma and loss felt in many immigrant communities. The annual ceremonies some communities hold at the Museum give meaning to it as a *place*, as well as simply a space for stories.

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[37] Finnimore, "Grief, Protest and Public History: The Memorial Wall in the Migration Museum, Adelaide," p. 2.
[38] Ibid, p. 3.

So by the mid-1990s Australia had a cultural policy which recognised immigrant heritage as a significant part of Australia's history. It also had a struggling national museum whose role as the storehouse for that heritage had been eroded. Without the backing of the federal government (towards a permanent home for any national collection), the NMA remained in limbo, and collecting practices and staff morale were adversely affected. Ian McShane, who worked at the NMA from 1990, remembered that the uncertainty led to uneven collecting practices, with curators not knowing whether the museum would be closing, moving, or continuing in its present state. As a result, they "gathered quickly".[39] Yet they soldiered on, too. Staff continued to exhibit, collect and research, and drafted a plan for the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia. As Director Margaret Coaldrake firmly stated in 1995:

> We have a museum. It is here, alive and well. What we don't have is the great big expensive building, but we do have the museum. Look, 400,000 people have come and seen our exhibits all over the country.[40]

Old Parliament House in Canberra was home to the museum's changing exhibitions for much of the 1990s. It was there that *Tolerance*, an exhibition examined later in this chapter, was first exhibited. It would take another seven years and a change of Government for the original planned museum to materialise.

Passengers **and the Australian National Maritime Museum**

The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the joint federal and state funded National Maritime Museum at Sydney's Darling Harbour had its origins in the 1980s. As Des Griffin recalled sardonically:

> Suddenly, the idea for a National Maritime Museum in Sydney gained endorsement! NSW Premier Neville Wran called Prime Minister Bob Hawke on the phone one day. This could be an attraction right in the new Darling Harbour development in Sydney, just in time for the upcoming 'celebrations' of 1988. Yes! After some wrangling about who should pay for what, it opened. Wasn't everyone pleased?[41]

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[39] Ian McShane, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 16 November 2010, Melbourne, Australia.
[40] Marion Frith, "Museum Plan Dogged By Controversy," *Age*, 9 October 1995, p. 9.
[41] Des Griffin, "Museums in Australia for Us - Part I," c2003, http://desgriffin.com/essays-2/pigott-intro/pigott1/.

It was a surprise to many that the concept was so quickly agreed to and funded. The museum's inaugural director, Kevin Fewster, agreed that this was the result of the "unusual position of two governments of a similar political persuasion", and the redevelopment of the Darling Harbour precinct for the Bicentenary.[42] Yet the project was derailed and plagued by funding problems, especially after the election of a Liberal government under Nick Greiner in March 1988. Although the museum building and construction started in 1986, with completion planned for 1988, it was not until the 29th of November 1991 that Prime Minister Bob Hawke officially opened the museum. Urgently needed extra funding was provided by the US Government (a $5 million bicentennial gift, in exchange for the development of the USA Gallery). President George Bush, with Australia's new Prime Minister Paul Keating, dedicated the Museum's USA Gallery on the 1st of January 1992. The profile of the Museum was further enhanced by Queen Elizabeth's visit the following month.[43]

The ANMM is an interesting puzzle piece in both political and museum history in the early 1990s. Kevin Fewster came from Adelaide where he had also been the inaugural director of that state's maritime museum. The South Australian Maritime Museum was established in 1986, along with the MMSA, as a part of the state's sesquicentenary celebrations. Both museums were part of the History Trust of South Australia. Fewster recalled that the History Trust "gave us wonderful latitude to do some very unconventional things".[44] Curators experimented with soundscapes and other "hooks" to try and engage "grazers" – the non-specialist museum-goers who browse through exhibitions often without prior knowledge or purpose. Fewster's approach was that of a university trained historian who wanted to bring history to a broader audience

[42] Robyn Williams (presenter), "In Conversation with Kevin Fewster," ABC Radio, 23 August 2007, available as podcast: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/inconversation/stories/2007/2004692.htm.
[43] Australian National Maritime Museum website, "Our history," http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1445.
[44] Williams, "In Conversation with Kevin Fewster," ABC Radio 23 August 2007.

through museums.[45] He knew that the ANMM, located in the heart of the Darling Harbour entertainment-zone, was the perfect opportunity to attract new "grazers".

So was the ANMM primarily a leisure and entertainment venue, like Darling Harbour as a whole, or did it also engage critically with Australia's maritime history? Shortly after his appointment as director, Fewster acknowledged that "we have a need to adopt an entrepreneurial approach, while at the same time pursuing the highest principles of social history". Yet, rather than a conflict of interest, he saw this as a potentially "great" and enjoyable challenge.[46] Andrea Witcomb was writing her doctoral dissertation in Communication and Media Studies during the first years of the ANMM.[47] Witcomb's overall argument was that the ANMM typified the "new museum" in that it displaced any overall linear narrative and instead offered a vignette design where visitors could make a personal connection with different elements in the exhibitions. Senior curator Mary Louise Williams offered an explanation of why this design was pursued and combined with a social history approach:

> Only a very small section of the population knows about the technology of sailing... In order to make the exhibition valid we had to widen it. Most people can relate to boats in some way - whether they travelled on one to holiday in America, came here as migrants or have ever sailed on the Harbour and waterways.[48]

In order to appeal to a broad audience, the ANMM presented itself as a museum of people, rather than a museum of boats and ships. The five themed galleries of the museum were 'Passengers', 'Commerce', 'Navy', 'Discovery', 'Leisure' and the Australia/US Gallery. Prospective visitors were reminded that these themes were applicable to all Australians, in what one journalist romanticised as our national "love

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[45] Fewster had taught history at UNSW, RMC Duntroon (Canberra) and Monash University in Melbourne. His area of interest was the First World War, including military censorship in Australia and Turkish views of the Gallipoli campaign. See Kevin Fewster, "Expression and suppression: aspects of military censorship in Australia during the Great War," PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1979; Kevin Fewster, Vecihi Başarin and Hatice Hürmüz Başarin, *Gallipoli: the Turkish story*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003.

[46] Kevin Fewster, "From the Director," *SIGNALS, the quarterly newsletter of the Australian National Maritime Museum*, no. 9, Autumn 1989, 2.

[47] Andrea Witcomb, "Floating the museum : a cultural study of the Australian National Maritime Museum," PhD Thesis, Central Queensland University, 1996.

[48] Mary Louise Williams, quoted in Amanda Meade, "Museum Documents More Than Ships," *Sydney Morning Herald*, Special Supplement, 29 November 1991, p. 17.

affair with the sea". [49] Here then is Margaret Anderson's warning about the safer themes proposed for the ANMM potentially realised. But was the exhibition of migration history in the gallery *Passengers* also "safe" and "romantic"?[50]

Figure 5: Image of Passengers from the ANMM website.
http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1342. These showcases remain as they were installed for the 1991 opening, although some content has changed in the last 20 years.

Visitors today still enter *Passengers* via an overpass from the main walkway to the gallery, which mimics the boarding of a ship. To their right a pile of suitcases signifies the migration theme. Perched on top of one suitcase is a statue of a forlorn-looking young boy, clutching his teddy bear. For the interior of the exhibition designers adopted a glamorous art deco-style theme, with a model of the 1937 ocean liner RMS *Orcades* as the centrepiece (see Figure 5). As in previous migration exhibitions, migrants' journeys and arrivals told through personal vignettes were a major feature.

Yet *Passengers* was unlike exhibitions that came before. The ANMM's remit to "reflect all areas of the Australian maritime experience, in all states" meant that for their purposes migration had to be primarily about the journey rather than the process of

[49] Ibid.
[50] Anderson, "Selling the past," 144.

settling.[51] As Witcomb put it in 1994, *Passengers* is "an exhibition about the experience of travelling by sea, loosely framed around the history of migration to Australia".[52] This approach both problematises and democratises the migration narrative, conflating leisure, tourism and migration. A later curatorial note added to the *Passengers* working file reads "Migration and passenger liners don't go together! Move liners to leisure, and expand migration section".[53] Yet many migrants did arrive on ocean liners, and it is their story which visually dominates the gallery. The exhibition as a whole remains in its original form today, although personal stories, objects, and community spotlights change periodically. The model of RMS *Orcades* remains the focus of the central space, from which rooms open up on either side: to the left, the nineteenth century, and to the right, the Vietnamese section (See Figure 6, next page).

At the MMSA in Adelaide in 1986, visitors were enticed to "discover the immigrant in us all!" At the ANMM in 1991, the remit was even broader. Visitors were invited to explore their "relationship with the sea", through the museum's exhibition themes.[54] For some, that relationship was to be through their own migration experience, or that of their ancestors. Kevin Jones, who was then the assistant curator on the *Leisure* gallery and co-curated a later exhibition on migration called *Tears Fears and Cheers*, recalls that there was curatorial discussion about whether to call the gallery 'Immigration' or 'Passengers', but that the latter name stuck.[55] It was perhaps more appropriate, as the many immigrants to Australia who arrived by aeroplane, rather than by boat, could not be included in any detail. Interestingly, in this maritime conception of immigration, Vietnamese refugees or 'boat people' were incorporated into a narrative that stretched back to the first European arrivals of the eighteenth century. They too were seen as passengers who completed a sea voyage to arrive in Australia.

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[51] Fewster, "From the Director," p. 2.
[52] Andrea Witcomb, "Postmodern space and the museum: the displacement of 'public' narratives," *Social Semiotics*, vol. 4, nos. 1-2, 257.
[53] File note, c.2004, "Passengers Curatorial Working File," c1990-1991, unnumbered binder, ANMM.
[54] Fewster, "From the Director," 2.
[55] Kevin Jones, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 18 September 2009, Adelaide, Australia.

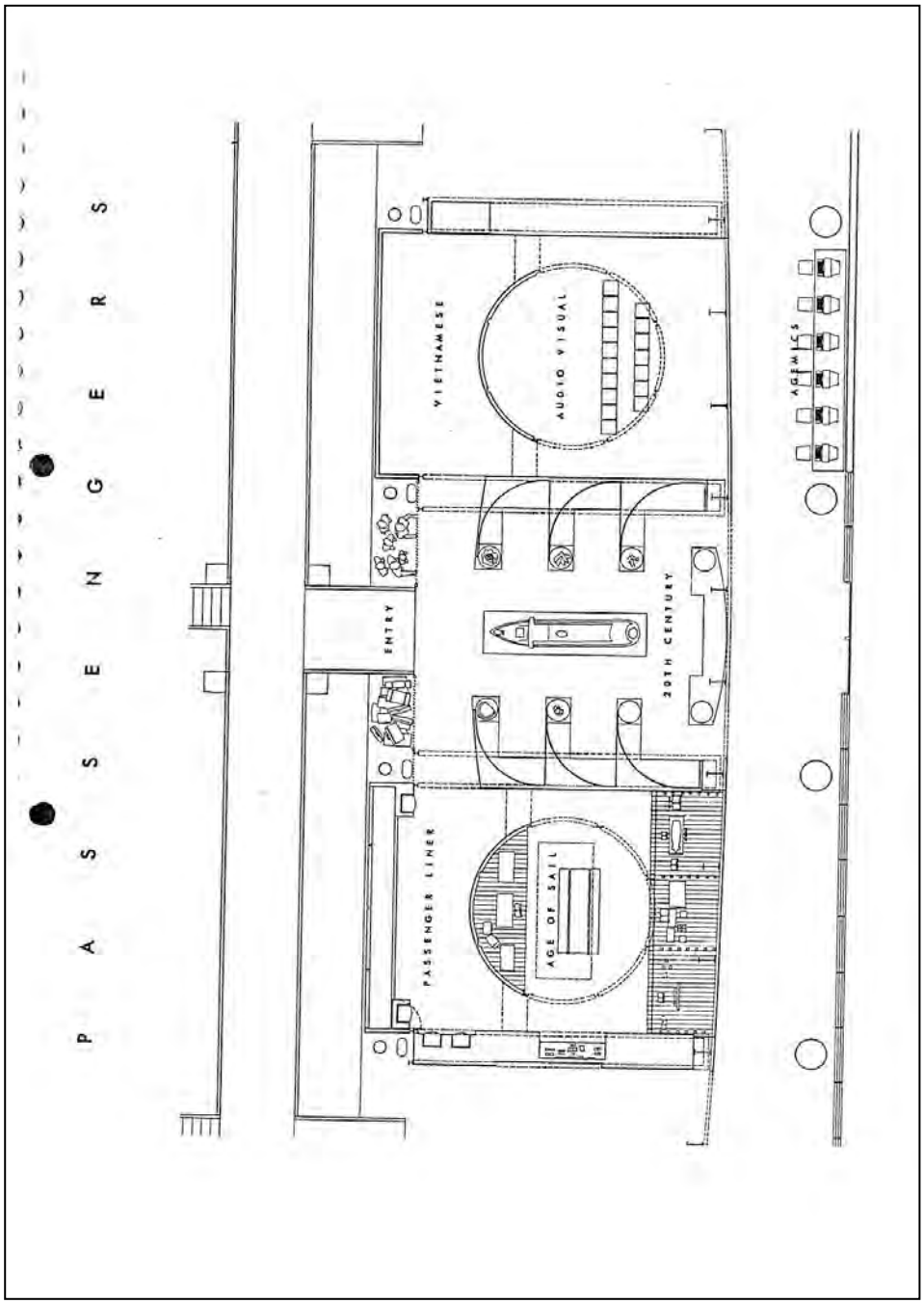

Figure 6: Floor plan for Passengers gallery, ANMM, File E02.0130\2 Exhibitions/Design Briefs 1990: USA Gallery, Passengers, Commerce.

The content of the gallery was broad in historical scope. The exhibition sections included the 'Age of Sail', which recounted the experiences of nineteenth century immigrants with a soundtrack of diary readings on continuous loop. Lighting effects

pointed out personal objects as the soundtrack addressed them. The five subthemes covered in the soundtrack were 'convicts', which explored the voyage during the convict period; 'the written word', which used snippets from emigrants' letters to explore what information about immigration was disseminated at the time; 'class', illuminating the various experiences of the voyage for people of different classes; 'medicine and health' relating to ships' surgeons and childbirth on board; and 'hazards of the sea' which again used excerpts from diaries covering shipwreck, fire, collision, icebergs, running aground and foundering at sea.[56] In the '20th century' section a continuous play loop of migrant's stories could be heard, depending on where the visitor was standing. Exhibition files show that these stories were to include "refugees and displaced people; children; women; tradesmen", all typical social history target groups, and also "the staff employed by the Australian Government to assist migrants during the voyage viz. escort officers, English teachers, religious, and customs officers".[57]

These additions to the typical migrant stories introduced an important element - the institutional and bureaucratic history of migration and overseas travel. The eventual story, titled 'Working with Migrants', included interviews with staff from the Australian Customs Service and the Department of Immigration, carried out as part of a joint oral history project between the ANMM and ABC Radio National's Social History Unit. The project was both a cost cutting measure for the ANMM, which could not afford the time to do all the interviews, and an opportunity to promote the new museum on radio.[58]

Complementing the oral history soundtracks, nineteenth century diary entries performed by actors, lighting cues and ambient sounds was a video produced by

[56] Anon, "AV Overview: Technical, Content, Sources," 6 November 1990, File E02.0386 Exhibitions: Passengers, Development of Audio Visuals and Computer Interactives, ANMM.
[57] Ibid.
[58] A special 'Walk Around the Museum' feature was developed for ABC's Talking History programme, with separate programs planned for each of the six themed galleries. Ros Bowden, an experienced oral history interviewer from the Social History Unit, undertook most of the interviews. Anon, "Suggested Interviewees for Migrant Audios, ABC Social History Recommendations," 28 September 1989, File E02.0386 Exhibitions: Passengers, Development of Audio Visuals and Computer Interactives, ANMM.

external multimedia communications group Audience Motivation, called 'Waves of Migration'. The ten minute video was designed to introduce the audience to the content of the *Passengers* gallery, beginning with the "wretched hardship and privation of the early 19th century", moving on to the "comfort and luxury of the 20th [century]", and ending with a postscript about Vietnamese refugees and the hope and promise of Australia. Here is the final text of the script:

> *Character voiceover: (Vietnamese English)*
> …there were forty of us in a twenty foot skiff. It took two months and we had as little as one pound of rice per person. But it was worth everything to reach Australia and freedom.
>
> *Narrator:*
> Australia still promises hope and a new life for those who need it most. For them, the sea still represents a road to the future.[59]

The narrative of the video was a progressive one – from the dark past Australia emerges into a bright future, one in which grateful migrants from all countries are given a fresh start. The history of Australia's exclusionary immigration policy based on race, or of mandatory detention of unauthorised arrivals, did not fit in this reduced and simplistic story of the 'good' nation. However, parts of this story were confirmed and challenged by the surrounding exhibits, where there was more room for the complexities of the past. Vietnamese refugees, alluded to briefly at the end of the video, were a major focus of the exhibition.

The Vietnamese stories in *Passengers* were gleaned from the oral histories of those who travelled on a fishing vessel called the *Hong Hai* from Vietnam to Darwin in 1978. The *Hong Hai* was the first case of Vietnamese 'boat people' arriving on Australian shores, and remarkably, the vessel had been accessioned into the collections of the NMA in Canberra in the early 1980s. However, due to difficulties in funds and transport, the *Hong Hai* remained in port in Darwin, its condition steadily deteriorating. The NMA agreed to lend the boat to the ANMM "for about five years", provided it transported it overland to Sydney and restored it to "seaworthy

[59] Audience Motivation Pty. Ltd., "Waves of Migration AV Script Final Version," 17 June 1991, File E02.0386 Exhibitions: Passengers, Development of Audio Visuals and Computer Interactives, ANMM.

condition".[60] The *Hong Hai* then became the basis for a section of *Passengers* called 'Voyage from Vietnam', curated by Sue Effenberger. Effenberger wrote in a file note:

> It is hoped that the display about the Hong Hai refugees will contrast some early newspaper accounts (circa 1977) about Boat People, written by ignorant social commentators, and whose attitudes were fuelled by prejudice. Accounts from the Vietnamese newspaper of the day, *Bell of Saigon*, will be included for those visitors who read Vietnamese.[61]

Effenberger undertook oral histories with some of the thirty eight passengers who sailed on the *Hong Hai*, and, during the interview process, precious objects and clothing used during the ship's 1978 journey were donated to the museum. These became the basis for a small collection relating to the *Hong Hai*, which also included replicas of lost objects (including a guitar, playing cards and a Buddhist shrine) and a series of oil paintings by Trong Nhon Do that provided a visual representation of events that occurred during the voyage. The compass used on the 52 day journey from Kien Giang, Vietnam, around Malaysia and Indonesia and finally to Darwin, was also donated.[62] The *Hong Hai* was later returned to the NMA, but this collection of material stayed with the ANMM. However the ANMM did acquire another Vietnamese refugee boat, *Tu Do*, in 1990, as part of its founding fleet, which was restored and conserved for display in 2000.[63] Not everyone thought it appropriate. Director Kevin Fewster remembered:

> …some people thought such a scruffy boat built thousands of miles from our shores and never owned or sailed by Australians was inappropriate for inclusion in Australia's National Maritime Collection.[64]

The inclusion not only the stories of Vietnamese refugees, but also their vessels as relics of *Australian* maritime history, was a powerful and radical statement by the

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[60] NMA, *Annual Report 1987/88,* p. 6; ANMM, "Desperate Voyage: the saga of the Hong Hai," *SIGNALS: Quarterly Newsletter of the Australian National Maritime Museum*, no. 9, Autumn 1989, 7.
[61] Sue Effenberger, "Note to Interactive Committee, voyage from Vietnam subtheme," 6 July 1990, File E02.0386 Exhibitions: Passengers, Development of Audio Visuals and Computer Interactives, ANMM.
[62] ANMM Collection items relating to the *Hong Hai* are available via search "Hong Hai" in the ANMM Collection online, http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1201.
[63] Stephen Thompson, "1975 Tu Do Refugee Boat," *Objects Through Time*, Online Exhibition, Migration Heritage Centre NSW, 2006: http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/tudo/.
[64] Kevin Fewster, "Tears, fears and cheers," *Journal for Maritime Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, December 2000, 46.

Museum – asserting that these more recent migrations should be considered alongside the generations that came before.[65]

While the overall tone of the *Passengers* gallery was of a positive migrant story, and the cumulative improvement of travel times and conditions could lead to an impression of 'things are better now than in the olden days', the Vietnamese arrivals element of the ANMM was a significant step in the display of migration history, especially as Sydney had no museum of migration. Importantly, objects sought for this exhibition, and restoration projects such as that of the *Hong Hai*, solidified ANMM collections in the migration area. This would aid later exhibitions such as *Tears, Fears and Cheers*.[66] The oral history program undertaken with the ABC, a database for visitors to look up ship's passengers, and the research and restoration of the *Hong Hai* all sought to present visitors with engaging and relevant stories about travel by sea and how for some travellers it is a journey that changed their life. Curators' efforts to represent many experiences ensured that *Passengers* did tell individual stories, and subsequent additions to the gallery have been successful.[67] However, there were some limitations. While the social history approach illuminated issues of class in the nineteenth century, race was less emphasised. Although the immigration restriction system was examined through the personal stories of workers and migrants, there was no overt critique or analysis of the attitudes and policies that informed migrant selection and exclusion in the twentieth century. And because settlement was not the focus, the policy of assimilation, so integral to Australia's immigration history, was not included. As a result, the maritime version of immigration history was a positive one

[65] *Tu Do* is still on display at the ANMM. However, due to a lack of exhibition space, the *Hong Hai* is currently in the Mitchell storage facility of the NMA in Canberra, not accessible to the general public. See NMA, *Annual Report 2008-2009*: http://www.nma.gov.au/about_us/nma_corporate_documents/annual_report/08_09/part_two/output_group_1_1_coll_dev_management/managing_the_collection/.

[66] This exhibition is analysed in Chapter 6.

[67] One example is *Majar*, (Arabic for migration), an exhibition on Lebanese migration and settlement to Australia, which was on display from 2004 – 2006 and curated by Kimberly O'Sullivan. This exhibition was based in extensive community research, difficult as early areas of settlement for the Lebanese communities have now moved (such as Redfern). Kimberly O'Sullivan, "Mahjar: Notes for guides," File E02.0911, Exhibitions: Lebanese Migration and Settlement, Mahjar – Passengers Changeover 2004, ANMM.

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overall – people journeyed, arrived, and became Australians. Other exhibitions of migration at this time focused on the more complex parts of the story – what happens when individuals and communities settle, mix, and develop over time in the new country.

Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton

Bridging Two Worlds – Jews, Italians and Carlton was a joint project between the Italian Historical Society (IHS), the Jewish Museum of Australia (JMA) and Museum Victoria (MV), and was on display from August 1992 until March 1994. This exhibition marked a turning point in community exhibitions in Australia, provided a catalyst for the establishment of a museum of migration in Melbourne and cemented new practices, such as co-operative agreements, which would make the future Immigration Museum a very different venture to the Migration Museum in Adelaide in 1986. According to two of its curators, Helen Light from JMA and Anna Malgorzewicz from MV, *Bridging Two Worlds* was "hailed in the professional community as a ground breaker in its reflection of our culturally diverse community because of the authenticity of the experience it portrayed".[68] It is still referred to by curators in different institutions as highly influential and "groundbreaking".[69] But its success was also evident in the visitors who flocked to it over the 19 months of display. The appeal of the exhibition was enhanced by its design, which Malgorzewicz remembers was remarkable for its time:

> In terms of design it was something quite new in museums, particularly for Museum Victoria... We created a streetscape [and] we recreated a dock, so there was a point of arrival, and then you actually walked down a street and there were shop fronts... it was literally like picking up bits of Lygon Street and then plonking it in the middle of the Museum. There was a *chuppah* [a Jewish marriage canopy], and then it concluded with a fountain. And then a coffee shop that served coffee – you could sit down, and with this beautiful coffee machine, it had an eagle on it, it was gorgeous.[70]

[68] Helen Light and Anna Malgorzewicz, "Bridging Three Worlds: the process of a museum partnership," *Museum National*, vol. 6, no. 3, February 1998, 20.
[69] Anderson ,"The Changing Museum," p. 308.
[70] Malgorzewicz, Interview.

The shops included in the recreated streetscape were chosen to convey "something of the balance between maintenance of old cultures and adaptation to the new".[71] They included representations of a Jewish bakery, an Italian tailor and shoemakers, a Kosher butcher, a Jewish bookshop and an Australian milk bar, which was run by a Jewish family on Lygon St for over thirty years.[72] The exhibition was rich in documentary evidence of these shops, the families who lived there and the communities they were a part of. Photographs of sporting clubs, schools, social clubs, churches, synagogues and festivals illustrated the historical development of Carlton between about 1920 and 1980, and how it was shaped by the lives that migrants built there. The streetscape was brought to life by a soundscape of neighbourhood noises - Yiddish songs, Catholic mass, the sounds of neighbours talking in their mother tongue. Although the exhibition was primarily about the Jews and Italians who settled in Carlton, Light claimed that "it is really the story of all immigrants groups and of all areas in which migrants settled".[73] This may explain its wide appeal – by evoking emotion, and the near past, the 'authenticity' of the historical experience was close to nearly all visitors, whether they were migrants themselves or not.

The aesthetically pleasing and experiential exhibition design was further enhanced by the words of Arnold Zable, a Melbourne-based author approached by the curators to create exhibition labels with a less museum-like, more lyrical feel. Zable was already well known at the time for his award-winning novel *Jewels and Ashes*, which traced his journey to discover his family history in Poland.[74] Malgorzewicz sees his involvement as another innovation in curatorship, which was still "relatively in its infancy" at the time.[75]

This innovative exhibition design, narrative and subject matter was the result of the shared leadership of the exhibition, which originated in an agreement between the

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[71] Helen Light, "Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton," in Australian Folk Trust et al, *The 5th National Folklife Conference, traditions, transitions, visions: Folklife in multicultural Australia,* p. 31.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid, p. 30.
[74] Arnold Zable, *Jewels and Ashes*, Newham, Vic.: Scribe, 1991.
[75] Malgorzewicz, Interview. Zable's work was so effective that Malgorzewicz would approach him again when drafting the gallery texts for the Immigration Museum. See Chapter 5, pp. 230-231.

three institutions. Although the MMSA had pioneered community-engagement work in the 1980s, this was the first time a major museum like MV had embarked upon a truly co-operative exhibition project with two culturally-specific community organisations. Even more fascinating is that the larger institution did not initiate the project. The idea for the exhibition originated in discussions between Helen Light and Ilma O'Brien of the IHS during the 5th National Folklife Conference in 1992.[76]

The result was a tri-partite partnership formed with the "most idealistic of intents", to provide a solution to the problem of where and how to best represent Australia's cultural diversity.[77] The three curators – Ilma O'Brien, Helen Light and Anna Malgorzewicz, worked together to produce the exhibition, and determine its content and themes. The JMA and the IHS were represented by committees from their own communities who collected research material, objects, photographs, oral histories and ideas. MV provided the venue, as well as the resources to produce, market and fund the exhibition. Curators at MV were also responsible for researching the general history of Carlton. These roles were defined by the Executive Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from all three institutions, and later formalised by a partnership agreement. A working group of curators from the three institutions met regularly with the steering committee. It was a gargantuan task, and one that Light and Malgorzewicz freely admit was not without its problems. Among these were the "different agendas, perceptions and expectations among the partners" and the unavoidable fact that "the tangible evidence of the two communities' respective histories [was] not equally weighted due to historical and cultural reasons".[78] The larger number of Italian migrants to Victoria meant that there was much more material culture available in those communities. For many Jewish refugees, belongings were scarce, and thus it was more difficult to document their histories visually. Yet these difficulties were overcome, and the model did indeed serve as a guide for future museum projects.

[76] Light, "Bridging Two Worlds," p. 30.
[77] Light and Malgorzewicz, "Bridging Three Worlds," 19.
[78] Ibid, 20.

The beauty of the agreements was that cultural material could stay with the organisations that had the closest links to the community, yet still be borrowed by larger institutions and made available to a broader visiting public. While many of these sorts of relationships had existed between museums and other organisations on an informal basis, *Bridging Two Worlds* took this a step further by making the agreement official and ongoing. The development of agreements with the IHS in 1993 with the JMA soon after were direct results of the collaborative exhibition process. These agreements were in preparation for the opening of the new Melbourne Museum, where the theme of Victoria's migration history was to be one among many. For this reason Malgorzewicz felt it was even more important that these stories and objects stay with the communities, rather than being absorbed into a state institution. She remembers:

> At that stage the notion of migration and settlement was going to be part of that bigger story that Museum Victoria was going to tell, that's what I was working on, there was no such thing as a separate museum... so we were developing a series of agreements with those communities… and making it clear, you know, that I wasn't the museum police and I'm coming to take your objects away, but I do have an interest in working with you in telling a story about Victoria's immigration history and cultural diversity, so I very much want and need you to work with me, otherwise I can't tell that story without you.[79]

When in August 1996 Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett announced the development of the Immigration Museum on Flinders Street in Melbourne, plans to exhibit migration history at the Melbourne Museum changed. Moya McFadzean joined MV as Senior Curator of Australian Society and Technology in 1995, and soon found herself working on plans for the Immigration Museum. She outlined the nature of new cultural agreements with the Museum of Chinese Australian History and the Victorian Folklife Association in February 1998:

> The agreements articulate the reciprocal recognition and respect for expertise that exists within the participating cultural organizations. They outline a commitment to avoiding duplication of resources and collections and provide a clear delineation of collecting responsibilities… They create a formal mechanism through which a large organization (Museum Victoria) can involve

[79] Malgorzewicz, Interview.

> community organizations in broad planning and development issues to ensure a breadth of cultural representation. Finally, the agreements lend previously informal relationships a level of seriousness and official integrity to be recognised at all levels of each organisation.[80]

These relationships between MV and various Victorian cultural organizations were instrumental in the formation of the Immigration Museum, its philosophy and its internal working culture. The partnerships also shifted the focus away from isolated community spotlights and toward a historically continuous narrative of the transition between different migrant groups – both those now seen as 'Australian' and ones that are still 'new'. As Light wrote of the *Bridging Two Worlds* exhibition "we have tried to look at the tensions endemic to this transitional phase in migrational settlement, the challenge of cultural maintenance and cultural adaptation".[81] This broader perspective - the ongoing flow of Australia's migrants, their traditions, transplanted into new communities - put *place* and *home* at the centre of the story. It seems that this focus on place, rather than ethnic identity, was the key to the success of *Bridging Two Worlds*. Malgorzewicz reflects:

> …I think a big element of its success was also one of nostalgia. Not just for the communities, the Italian and Jewish communities or the earlier Irish community that had called Carlton home, but just for Melbournians particularly, and they loved it... to me demonstrated that you can develop a very serious exhibition that explores that history, [and] looks at some pretty tricky, challenging aspects of identity, but one which had incredible popular appeal, and which resonated with everyone.[82]

However, the nostalgic tone of the exhibition may have been aided by the exclusion of some of the 'trickier' topics. These included "evidence of deep-seated communal conflict and exploitative employment practices, both between and within the communities concerned".[83] Malgorzewicz and Light made some reference to these absences in their 1998 paper, recognising that they were the inevitable result of negotiations between the communities, their representatives and the exhibition team during the development process. In this light these exclusions seem almost benign.

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[80] Moya McFadzean, "Partnership Agreements: More Than the Paper They're Written On?," *Museum National*, vol. 6, no. 3, February 1998, 21.
[81] Light, "Bridging Two Worlds," p. 31.
[82] Malgorzewicz, Interview.
[83] Anderson, "The Changing Museum," p. 308.

However, as Anderson warned, such decisions had ongoing implications for the types of "museum knowledge" communicated in exhibitions of migration. She was concerned that the "warm and celebratory" approach taken towards non-dominant cultures was unevenly weighted against a "critical and searching" method of interrogation more often applied to the dominant culture.[84] Viv Szekeres had previously described this process of negotiation with culturally-specific communities at the MMSA as "finding a mutually acceptable version of the past" and recalled instances where she was asked "not to reveal a lapsed faith, a 'mixed marriage', an illegitimate birth, or a questionable war record".[85] As Anderson pointed out, these negotiations took place not only between museums and communities, but "within the framework of the rituals and mythology of cultural diversity at a bureaucratic and political level".[86]

This is a salient point. The politics of cultural diversity emphasise the need to present a cohesive image of minority cultural groups, in order to counter negative stereotyping of those groups in the media, to correct assumptions about cultural practices, and to bolster support for the multicultural ethos.[87] The drive to recognise cultural diversity as a strength of modern Australia in this period rested on these positive examples, in which communities themselves had heavily invested. The inevitable 'negotiation' of the past was not a new experience, as we have seen exhibitions from the 1980s, but here it was part of a broader change in museum culture instead. In the case of *Bridging Two Worlds*, a close working relationship between the JMA, the IHS and MV was fostered at the cost of some material that would have proven divisive. The ties made between these organisations also paved the way for future collaborations, and ensured that important historical collections were made available for all Victorians. A few years later, in Canberra, the pressure to exclude particular subjects from an exhibition in order to foster a consensual narrative came not from the communities involved, but from a government department.

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Szekeres, "Myths, Meaning and Minefields," p. 301, 305.
[86] Anderson, "The Changing Museum," p. 307.
[87] Ibid. Anderson used an example of women's roles in Islamic society, a topic planned for inclusion in a WA Museum exhibition she worked on that ultimately proved too divisive in the community and so was removed.

> *Australia is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. Almost half of Australia's population was born overseas. By and large we manage to live together successfully. But discrimination and prejudice are evident. Indigenous Australians and many migrant groups are still the targets of stereotypes. How tolerant are we of cultural diversity? For Australians today the issue is not whether we should have a multicultural society, but what kind of multicultural society we should have.*
> *It's up to you.*[88]

This was the introductory text panel of the NMA's major touring exhibition, *Tolerance*, which opened at Old Parliament House, Canberra on the 21st of September 1995. It went on tour in July 1996, travelling to Museum Victoria, the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo, the Newcastle Regional Museum, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, and Liverpool Regional Museum. By the exhibition's close in January 1998 it had been on display for more than two years, and an accompanying CD-ROM developed for the exhibition had been distributed to every school in the country. Hundreds of visitors had participated in the public programs that travelled with the exhibition, and others were involved virtually on an exciting new portal called the internet. In many ways this exhibition was groundbreaking and successful. However, the limitations imposed by the theme of 'tolerance' and a close relationship to its sponsors, particularly the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), proved challenging for curators. As the opening text suggests, this was not a straightforward success story of multicultural Australia, but an investigation of why difference still incites intolerance.

[88] NMA, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text", 12 September 1995, NMA Administrative File 0122 Marketing: Development – Financial. Assistance for Exhibition: "International Year of Tolerance".

Figure 7: Tolerance flier showing composite face image (Aboriginal and ethnic press clippings in background). Designed by Steven Joseph, NMA Administrative File, 95/0443 Consultancies: Exhibition Design – 'International Year For Tolerance' Spatchurst Design Associates.

The exhibition was made possible by $420,000 of Commonwealth government funds allocated through DIEA to celebrate the UNESCO International Year of Tolerance. This amount was supplemented by grants from the Australia Council ($60,000), Visions of Australia ($60,000) and UNESCO itself ($15,000).[89] Senior Curator of Social History, Ian McShane, was appointed as exhibition co-ordinator for the project. He was always uncomfortable with the abstract concept of 'tolerance', as it was imbedded more in political philosophy than in popular culture. Although there are many ways to address

[89] UNESCO funding was used for the development of the CD-ROM education kit, 'A Fair Go'. Australia Council funds were used for the accompanying community arts programs. The Visions of Australia grant was allocated to tour the exhibition nationally. Miscellaneous documents, NMA Administrative File 95/0441 Correspondence: Australia Council – International Year for Tolerance Exhibition.

the concept historically, there was an expectation that the exhibition would be specifically about tolerance of cultural diversity. As McShane points out:

> With such a substantial sponsorship from the Department of Immigration, it was probably always going to be about ethnic diversity - cultural diversity seen through an ethnic prism, at least the exhibition component of it.[90]

After a number of draft exhibition briefs, the exhibition team settled on the "communication objectives":

> To communicate that Australia has always been culturally diverse, that has had to struggle to come to terms with this diversity, and is still struggling; to convey that tolerance of difference is beneficial to quality of life and society; to challenge assumptions and stereotypes of what it means to be an Australian.[91]

Rather than a homogenous core with diverse minorities, this approach highlighted the continuing diversity of Australia, both before and after 1788, through a chronological 'peopling' approach. It also avoided the simplistic 'progress' narrative exemplified by *Passengers* – the move from a dark past to a brighter future. The element of struggle emphasised the continual need to confront issues of difference and discrimination. Like earlier exhibitions at the MMSA and the PHM, *Tolerance* was designed to challenge popularly held beliefs about 'real' Australians. It did this by asserting that all Australians have a set of beliefs and attitudes that shape the way we see others. The curators referred to this concept as "cultural baggage", the same term used by curators at the MMSA in 1986. The final panel of *Tolerance* read:

> *We all carry around attitudes and assumptions about other people. We are all capable of prejudice and intolerance. What we have in our cultural baggage influences how we view the world and act towards others. If you unpack your cultural baggage, what do you find?*[92]

A key decision was to target school-aged children, in particular high school students, as the primary audience. Associated programs such as the development of a website with the Brisbane-based CONTACT Youth Theatre, a video made by students of Sarah Redfern and Tempe High Schools, education kits and the CD-ROM 'A Fair Go', all

[90] McShane, Interview.
[91] Anon, "Tolerance: Report on project," NMA Administrative File 95/0441.
[92] 'Tolerance' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text", NMA Administrative File 95/0122.

catered to this age group.[93] McShane noted that the decision to target school groups also affected the type of history told, for example the focus on cultural diversity and visual difference rather than a detailed examination of policy change, and the adoption of the accessible metaphor of cultural baggage as a way of exploring that difference. Yet despite what McShane expresses as almost a compromise of history, the final storyline reveals the exhibition team's achievement in constructing a narrative of immigration, discrimination and belonging in Australia, whilst keeping the language and concepts appropriate to a school-aged audience.

The exhibition was divided into four roughly chronological sections. The introduction was a large structure of suitcases that introduced the cultural baggage theme and housed the video installation from Sarah Redfern and Tempe High Schools. 'Contacts and Encounters' focused on early interactions between Indigenous people and the British settlers and religious intolerance in nineteenth century Australia; 'Shifting the Goalposts' addressed twentieth century migration, particularly post-war diversity and policies of protection and assimilation applied to Indigenous Australians; and 'Changing Perceptions' which tackled racism in sport, Australia's approach to refugee crises since the Second World War, and issues of identity in modern Australia.[94]

The exhibition featured some of the same items from the Museum's ethnic heritage collection as were displayed in the 1988 exhibition *Survival*, as well as many objects from their growing indigenous collections.[95] However, a list of the objects and their labels from the exhibition's working file reveals that many items were loaned from other institutions to fill gaps. For instance, a collection of religious items was borrowed from the Welsh Church Archives in Melbourne, and items relating to the experience of Irish Catholics, victims of "religious intolerance", were loaned from a local priest in Canberra.[96] A cricket bat made by an early Lutheran settler was lent by the Lobethal

[93] Anon, "Draft Briefing Notes for Tolerance," NMA Administrative File 0122.
[94] Anon, "A Brief Overview of the Exhibition," NMA Administrative File 0122.
[95] Items from the museum's Alagich Collection relating to the Association of Federation of Yugoslav Immigrants in Australia were common to both exhibitions. It is likely that items from Polones Song and Dance Ensemble Collection (a Polish community group), were also displayed in *Survival*.
[96] Section 2.2.2, "Tolerance Object Labels," NMA Administrative File 95/0536 Exhibition – 'Tolerance' – Project Management.

Archives and Historical Museum of South Australia.[97] The Museum of Chinese Australian History in Melbourne and the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo both lent small objects relating to Chinese herbal remedies. All of these objects helped display the cultural diversity of Australia in the nineteenth century – a period which the NMA's collection did not adequately represent. The loans also demonstrate the vital collecting and documenting work undertaken by small ethno-specific museums. These were just the sort of items that Anderson had recently argued constituted a vital and valuable "Distributed National Collection".

What their inclusion also shows is the desire to complicate the notion of mainstream and minorities, or 'Anglo' and 'ethnic'. A vignette titled 'Cymru in Australia' explained that of the almost 1,800 Welsh convicts transported to Australia, many spoke no English, "making their exile even more isolated".[98] Similarly, another panel asserted:

> *British settlers in colonial Australia were a "multicultural" group. They included English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Cornish and Channel Islander people. Some British immigrants spoke little English, celebrated their own national days, and preserved their cultural heritage. Today we refer to the early settlers as Anglos or Anglo-Celts. This overlooks the diversity of British settlers.*[99]

The title of this panel, 'British to the bootstraps?', overtly questioned the cultural homogeneity of nineteenth century Australia. This was a marked departure from the Museum's *Survival* exhibition of six years earlier, which divided Australians into three cultural amalgams – 'British', 'non-British', and 'Aboriginal' – and spoke somewhat contradictorily of the survival of all cultures despite the dominance of one. There was a growing sophistication or perhaps particularity in this new interpretation, a shift away from the conflation of 'multicultural' with NESB and towards a democratised version of diversity where all Australians are of equal cultural worth.[100] The mainstream culture was not devalued simply because it was the dominant one. On the contrary, its very

[97] Section 2.3.2, Ibid.
[98] 'Cymru in Australia' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[99] 'British to the bootstraps?' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[100] Curators at the MMSA in 1986 had pre-empted this shift in their examination of the cultural diversity of English settlers. See Chapter 2, p. 98.

dominance was questioned. The Welsh were the perfect example: they spoke a different language, yet were previously subsumed under the label 'British'.

However, the focus of most case studies in the exhibition was on "community groups that are today the target of negative stereotyping and discrimination".[101] Refugees were one such group. McShane remembers:

> We thought that there was an underlying current of either overt racism or institutionalized racism in Australia. We were concerned about the gradual tightening of restrictions around asylum seekers, and I think more broadly we thought that there probably wasn't sufficient appreciation in the general Australian population of the diversity of that population, either before the Second World War, or even the diversity of recent arrivals.[102]

The historical parts of the exhibition, then, served as a way to demonstrate that so-called 'foreigners' had always been a feature of Australian society, from colonial times onwards. Material recently acquired by the NMA from the Port Hedland Detention Centre offered curators the opportunity to address changing immigration policies affecting asylum seekers. In 1995, this was still fresh history. Although the option of detaining persons arriving in Australia without a valid visa had been possible since the Migration Act of 1958, it was only in 1992 that the Keating Labor Government introduced mandatory detention for all unauthorised arrivals. The change had bipartisan support, garnered following the spike in unauthorised arrivals by boat from Vietnam, Cambodia and China between November 1989 and January 1992.[103] Despite the general support for the policy, it seems that the DIEA were keen to keep the actual system and experience of detention concealed from the public, or at least from inquiring minds. McShane recalls that the DIEA, which was at the time headed by Senator Nick Bolkus, was "very unhappy" about the Museum's proposal to display

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[101] Ian McShane, "Tolerance," Exhibition description, no date, NMA Administrative File 95/516 Exhibitions – 'International Year for Tolerance' Exhibition 1995 – DASH Curatorial Programs.
[102] McShane, Interview.
[103] See "What is the history of mandatory detention in Australia?," para 6.2, in Australian Human Rights Commission, *A last resort? The Report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention*, 13 May 2004, http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/children_detention_report/report/chap06.htm. For a deeper historical perspective on the detention of asylum seekers in Australia, see Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange, "Asylum-Seekers and National Histories of Detention," *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, vol. 48, no. 4, December 2002, 509-527.

material from Port Hedland, and as a result, the exhibition was "closely watched".[104] The relationship between this government department and a federally-funded museum, (and importantly, a national museum), was complex. McShane found himself forwarding an advance copy of the exhibition text to the Department, so they could review its content and brief the Minister. This working environment had an adverse affect on curatorial staff. McShane recognised a "process of filtering and self-censorship" in cases where "you know what the interests of your sponsor are".[105] His description echoes the concerns of historians and curators in the late 1980s, which were apprehensive about the increased sponsorship of museum exhibition spaces by private companies.[106] Ironically, in this case it was not the interests of a private corporate sponsor that interfered with the exhibition, or the concerns of a particular community, but that of the public purse – the government department from which the funding came.

To the credit of NMA staff, in this case they were able to stand by their intellectual commitment. They did not buckle to the suggestions of a liaison officer from the DIEA, who curtly told McShane "nobody is interested in refugees".[107] The exhibition included objects such as a "security pass issued to lawyers visiting the inmates at the Port Hedland refugee facility" and "handcrafts produced by inmates of the Port Hedland refugee facility while waiting for a decision on their applications for refugee status". These had been donated to the Museum by Marion Le, a refugee advocate who had been present at an earlier consultation with stakeholders hosted by the NMA.[108] Another object given by Le was a model boat made in the Pilau Bidong refugee camp in Malaysia by a Vietnamese refugee named Nguyen Dieu Thong. Rather than display

[104] McShane, Interview.
[105] Ibid.
[106] See Anderson, "Selling the Past" and Winkworth, "The Museum Inc."
[107] Ibid.
[108] Section 4.2, "Tolerance Object Labels," NMA Administrative File 95/0536; Anon, "Report on Content Workshop, International Year of Tolerance Project, National Museum of Australia, Yarramundi, 20 July 1995," NMA Administrative File 95/0536. Other invited guests who attended this workshop were Ms Joanna Boileau, Ms Mary Dimech, Ms Mary-Anne Ellis, Ms Aziza Abdul-Halim, Mr Russell Jack, Mr Tuong Quang Luu, Ms Anna Malgorzewicz, Mr George Papadopolous, and Emeritus Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki.

these objects as part of a sub-theme on Vietnamese refugees, they formed part of a larger focus on the history of refugee arrivals to Australia.[109]

Refugee arrivals also appeared in other areas of the exhibition. A beautiful wooden statue of a seated Buddha made by Vietnamese sculptor Le Thanh Nhon was part of a display of objects made or worn by refugees.[110] Mr Le was a famous painter and sculptor in Vietnam, but had been forced to flee his country with his family in 1975, and became one of the earliest Vietnamese refugees to arrive by boat in Australia. He settled in Melbourne, where one of his children, Hung Le, later became a well-known comedian. A documentary featuring Hung Le, called "What's So Funny?", was screened in another section of *Tolerance*.[111] This "unique family connection" was highlighted by the curators in media releases about the exhibition, and Hung Le performed a stand-up comedy routine at the exhibition's opening.[112] However this light-hearted addition to the event's proceedings attracted the concern of ministerial minders, who knew that Hung's repertoire included a particular joke about people of Greek heritage that on a previous occasion had offended Senator Bolkus. It was a ridiculous situation - in McShane's words, "what do you do? Tell a comedian he can't tell a particular joke?"[113] Although trivial, these events again point to the close level of ministerial scrutiny under which curators at the NMA worked.

Another perspective on the experiences of refugees and other migrants from Asia featured the Australian white nationalist group National Action's racist poster "Sink Them" (which called for an end to humanitarian immigration policies, and targeted Asians as undesirable immigrants). The exhibition text included this strident assertion:

> *In recent years media coverage and public debate of immigration issues has focused on "boat people". The arrival of people by sea from the Indo-China*

[109] 'Australia & refugees' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[110] Section 3.3.3, "Tolerance Object Labels," NMA Administrative File 95/0536. Mr Le lent the sculpture to the museum for the exhibition. His work was again featured by the museum in the 2001 opening Action exhibition, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia*. See Chapter 7, p. 288-290.
[111] Steve Westh (director), *What's So Funny?* [videorecording], South Melbourne, Vic.: AFI Distribution, 1994.
[112] McShane, "Tolerance," Exhibition description, no date, NMA Administrative File 95/516.
[113] McShane, Interview.

> *region echoes earlier concerns about Australia's vulnerability to invasion from the north.*
>
> *Sensationalist media reports characterise the arrival of "boat people" as a flood. In terms of global refugee movements these arrivals are more like an occasional drip.*[114]

Six months before *Tolerance* opened, boat people were again on the front pages of Australia's newspapers. A fishing boat carrying eighteen East Timorese arrived in Darwin Harbour on the 30th of May 1995, and the passengers were swiftly transferred to the Curtin Detention Centre in Western Australia. Lawyers for the group appealed successfully to the Federal Court for their release on bridging visas. Curators included these events as a case study in *Tolerance*, noting that "it has raised questions about Australia's policy on the detention of illegal immigrants" and also "highlights the complex relationship between Australia and Indonesia".[115] Given the disapproval of the DIEA with regards to the Port Hedland material, the inclusion of such recent and controversial events was a bold decision.

The similarly edgy Aboriginal content of the exhibition was by contrast not contested. In the new political climate of Keating's Labor Government, the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia's curators' demand for "justice" rather than "tolerance" was no longer anti-establishment. The formation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991 and the submission of the final report from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in April of the same year brought the ongoing injustice endured by Aboriginal Australians into the consciousness of the wider public. For the first time, there was a Prime Minister willing not only to acknowledge the past, but to argue that settler Australians all held some responsibility for the current situation. In what is now referred to as his "Redfern speech", given on December 10th, 1992 to launch the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, Keating implored:

> We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us. Didn't Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? The poor of Britain? The refugees from war and famine and

[114] 'Asian Invasion?' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[115] 'East Timorese Case Study' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.

> persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia? Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians - the people to whom the most injustice has been done?[116]

Through this 'new' Australian history, phrased beautifully and powerfully by his speech-writer Don Watson, many Australians were confronted with the idea that they had a role in the dispossession of Indigenous Australians.[117] Migrants from Europe, Asia and elsewhere were part of this history too – Australia had "reached out" to them in their time of need. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that curators from the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia (the only part of the museum to remain continuously supported by the Keating Government), were able to communicate their interpretation of 'tolerance' without obstruction from any government department. This was the opening panel for the theme 'Contacts and encounters':

> *Many of the first contacts between Europeans and the indigenous people of Australia were aggressive. Conflicts resulted in the massacre of many Aboriginal people.*
>
> *Early settlers saw indigenous people as savages. Colonial artists caricatured indigenous people as primitive people in a strange landscape.*
>
> *Very little tolerance was shown by early settlers to Aboriginal people, especially regarding the loss of their land and the breakdown of their social structures.*
>
> *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek justice not tolerance*.[118]

Just five years earlier, controversy had erupted in NSW when the curators at the Powerhouse Museum had used the term "invasion" instead of "settlement" in the *Australian Communities* gallery.[119] Under the prime ministership of John Howard, these ideas would resurface, resulting in a row over the massacres of Aboriginal

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[116] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, *Speeches to mark the national and international launch of the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People*, Canberra: ATSIC, 1993, p. 5.
[117] Don Watson has acknowledged that "the speech was made to a black audience but its core was an appeal to white Australians." See Watson, *Recollections of a bleeding heart: a portrait of Paul Keating PM*, Milsons Point, NSW: Knopf, 2002, pp. 288-291. See also Bain Attwood, *Telling the truth about Aboriginal history*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005, pp. 27-29.
[118] 'Contacts and Encounters' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[119] See Chapter 3, pp. 135-137.

people and their display at the NMA.[120] *Tolerance* demonstrates what was possible during the Keating years, with the ideological support of the political party in power. Also, unlike the NMA's 1988 exhibition *Survival,* which suffered from the attempt to position Indigenous Australians alongside Anglo and ethnic groups under a common rubric of 'cultural survival', *Tolerance* maintained separate interpretations. The Gallery of Aboriginal Australia curators were able to reposition the topic of 'tolerance' to assert their own unique histories – and to locate these outside a more general multiculturalist perspective. As a result, the message that Indigenous Australians are not homogenous, that they have valid claims to many 'countries' within what we now call 'Australia' and that they are the proud custodians of the culture and knowledge of many groups across the continent and its islands was expressed strongly throughout the exhibition.

Tolerance was a multifaceted exhibition and it has only been possible to address some relevant aspects here. In terms of a history of exhibitions of migration, it was both influenced by what came before, and attempted to push 'beyond ethnicity' and into concepts of perception and identity. A chronological history of migration to Australia provided the context within which current attitudes were revealed. Cultural baggage was the metaphor adopted to examine these issues. As McShane hoped, the exhibition reflected on the "successes as well as the stresses associated with diversity and tolerance in Australia".[121] The tension between the core culture and peripheral culture which had existed in migration exhibitions for almost ten years still persisted; yet here we can see the beginnings of a shift towards democratising the migration narrative in an attempt to include everyone. This tactic would be taken up more explicitly in the years to come.

Conclusion: Beyond ethnic diversity

Passengers, *Bridging Two Worlds* and *Tolerance* could all be seen as migration exhibitions in much the same tradition of those that came before. They wove a

[120] These events are discussed in Chapter 7, pp. 275-276.
[121] McShane, "Tolerance," Exhibition description, no date, NMA Administrative File 95/516.

chronology of migrant arrivals, explored the history of different cultural groups and drew on community knowledge and expertise to reveal personal stories. But they also built on those previous exhibitions, attracting different audiences and modifying the migration theme to suit new contexts. They reveal the diversification of the 'nation of immigrants' narrative, and its appeal as an alternate and inclusive national story. The commonalities (and some disparities) between these three different exhibitions help explain the beginning of a shift in the presentation of migration history in Australian museums in the mid 1990s.

While European post-war migrants still featured prominently in all three of these exhibitions, it was recent asylum seekers who were explored in depth in both *Passengers* and *Tolerance*. In both cases, museum staff attempted to counter stereotypes, fears and assumptions about 'boat people' in the media. Both also drew on the strong correlation between recent boat arrivals and past waves of migrants, and in doing so used Australia's immigration history as a way of legitimizing the acceptance of refugees by the Government. In *Passengers* the exhibition of a Vietnamese refugee boat was a powerful ideological statement about the place of refugees in Australia's heritage – articulating a positive 'nation of immigrants' story of which they were an equal part. However, in *Tolerance* the inclusion of material depicting the detention of Vietnamese and East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia and Malaysia shed light on the other side of Australia's apparent benevolence, and questioned the 'threat' posed by these arrivals. The exhibition had an overriding educative message imposed by its theme, yet it also allowed curators to reflect critically on Australia's history of immigration restriction and internment of enemy aliens during times of war.

Both *Passengers* and *Bridging Two Worlds* appealed to visitors' emotions and nostalgia for a lost era. There is a strong sense here of the passing of a generation of post-war migrants, those who advocated for representation in the first official migration exhibitions of the 1980s. In *Passengers* nostalgia was evoked by the art deco surroundings and intricate ship models. *Bridging Two Worlds* however broke new

ground in design and planning. The immersive streetscape created within the exhibition appealed to anyone who had visited Melbourne between the 1920s and 1980s. The experience of migration, from the ship's dock to settling, working and becoming a part of a community was constructed in such a way that people were drawn in to the deeper and more complex social histories of Carlton. Previous migration exhibitions had recreated the migrant hostel as a site of post-war migrant memory. *Bridging Two Worlds* followed migrants past the arrival and beyond the hostel, placing them firmly within the Australian communities they helped to shape. It also paved the way for cultural agreements with migrant communities, which as we will see shaped the way migration history was told at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne in 1998.

As this examination has revealed, there was a strong message in all three exhibitions that migration and cultural diversity are important features of Australian *national* identity. In earlier exhibitions, such as the opening galleries of the MMSA in 1986, multicultural policy was explained and treated as a potential basis for a new Australian identity. By the mid-1990s, the policy had become accepted, at least officially, as a reality. One expression of this is in Keating's 1994 Creative Nation policy statement of 1994:

> What is 'distinctly Australian' is what we create out of that unique combination of factors that derives from our inheritance, our environment and our position in the world. This includes an indigenous culture, both ancient and continuing; a British cultural legacy (imprinted through language, the law and our institutions); the diverse inheritances of immigrant groups; the distinct experiences of class and region and the impact of place. We are genuinely and distinctly 'multi-cultural' with meanings that extend beyond ethnicity.[122]

This shift, from convincing Australians that multiculturalism was a policy for everyone, to asserting that we are "genuinely and distinctly 'multicultural'", can be seen as an attempt to move beyond the politicised debate about immigration and multiculturalism. It implies that diversity runs deep in Australian history, and that the public perception of multicultural policy has suffered from its close connotation with 'ethnic' or minority groups. Instead, the policy statement suggests that real "multi-

[122] Department of Communications and the Arts, *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, p. 9.

culturalism" goes "beyond ethnic diversity". The same idea was expressed in the text for *Tolerance*:

> *For Australians today the issue is not whether we should have a multicultural society, but what kind of multicultural society we should have.*[123]

It is the potentially wide appeal of this broader diversity, increasingly referred to as "cultural" rather than "ethnic", which is important.

At the Museums Australia national conference of September 1997, visiting Canadian anthropologist and museum director Dr Michael M. Ames had some advice for his Australian counterparts:

> The proselytising mission of museums needs to move in the opposite direction from what it was: not to help assimilate the masses into the mainstream of society, but to assist the mainstream in overcoming fear of differences and in discovering positive experiences of cultural diversity.[124]

The move that he was advocating, away from a 'contributory' multiculturalism and towards a more inclusive and positive exploration of difference, was already underway in some Australian museums. However, another force was at work, one which Margaret Anderson at the same conference, said "struck fear in my heart".[125] An impassioned speech by Australia's newly-elected Prime Minister, John Howard, in which he called for a version of Australian history "not written definitively by those who take the view that Australians should apologize for most of it", challenged the transformative historical revisions that had taken place over the previous twenty years.[126] A formidable backlash against multiculturalism and the recently-won Aboriginal land rights cases was about to begin. For the first time in the history of Australian migration exhibitions, a change of federal government from liberal to conservative had occurred. It would profoundly affect the type of migration history told in Australian museums for the next decade or more. In this new political context,

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[123] 'Tolerance' panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," NMA Administrative File 95/0122.
[124] Michael M. Ames, "Multicultural or multicluttered? Museums and the new world disorder" in Ian Walters et al (eds), *Unlocking Museums: Proceedings of the 4th National Conference of Museums Australia Inc,* Northern Territory: Museums Australia NT Branch, 1997, p. 301.
[125] Anderson, "The Changing Museum," p. 308
[126] John Howard, quoted in Anderson, Ibid.

the shift already underway in museum exhibitions away from inventing the ‘nation of immigrants’ narrative and towards ‘democratising the nation of immigrants’ assumed a new significance.

PART TWO

WHAT ABOUT ME?

DEMOCRATISING THE NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

5

Australia's Ellis Island?

This isn't a museum about them – it's about us.[1]

Historians, like curators, need to identify turning points in the stories that they tell. In order to give the narrative shape, we link events together, sometimes implying a linear causality which may in fact be more complex, multi-layered and overlapping. At this point in my story of migration exhibitions, there was a shift in the way curators approached the 'nation of immigrants' narrative, but there was no watershed or key event that provoked it. Rather, the change was influenced and shaped by a combination of factors.[2] So to understand the transition from what I call 'inventing the nation of immigrants' to 'democratising the nation of immigrants', we need to look to the broader political and social context in which these exhibitions were created. Thus far we have seen the narrative of migration born into Australian museums in the mid-1980s as a result of community demands, the introduction of multicultural policies at federal and state level, and the embracing of social history in academia. The creation of a 'nation of immigrants' story was posited as a new national narrative, one more representative of the Australian people than previous stories of pioneering Englishmen. Culture and ethnicity were the focus of this radical push to redefine understandings of the national culture and heritage. But by the mid-1990s, the message that 'Australia is truly multicultural' was no longer fresh and appealing, and was instead being increasingly, aggressively challenged.

As the opening quote of this chapter demonstrates, multiculturalism was still understood by many as being about 'them' – meaning minorities, 'others', non-

[1] Anna Malgorzewicz, inaugural director of the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, quoted in Paul Heinrichs, "Touch-and-feel Museum Is True To the Migrant Experience," *Age*, 14 November 1998.
[2] As Martin Crotty and David Roberts have eloquently put it, "important historical developments are not usually the product of single events or moments that can be precisely pinpointed, but rather lie in a pattern of multiple, related events or broader processes with identifiable antecedents and consequences." See Crotty and Roberts (eds), *Turning Points in Australian History*, Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2008, p. 12.

Australians and 'new' Australians. This was a major problem for museums and exhibitions about migration, which had been associated closely with multicultural policies despite often containing complex histories that challenged simple political rhetoric. A change of federal government in 1996 saw the rolling back of multicultural institutions, and a new official language of "core values" began to replace multiculturalism's celebration of difference and diversity. Australia's second migration museum, announced by the Jeff Kennett Liberal government of Victoria in 1996, was therefore a very different beast to its South Australian precursor. Rather than "them", it was to be a museum about "us".

In this same period immigration became even more politicised by the appearance of far right-wing politician Pauline Hanson and her One Nation party. The need to reaffirm Australia's history of ethnic and cultural diversity to counter One Nation's divisive white nationalism prompted new explorations of Australia's migration history. In a country searching for a more "comfortable" past, the narrative of migration offered a less-problematic alternative to both xenophobic white Australian political voices and so-called 'black armband' histories.[3] The Immigration Museum in Melbourne, and the exhibitions analysed in the following chapters, are part of this second phase of Australian migration history exhibitions, which sought to democratise and promote the 'nation of immigrants' as an inclusive national story. At the heart of this new version was Australia's success as an immigrant nation. The influence of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York on these new Australian museums and exhibitions is significant, as it represented a shift towards a more unified, patriotic and popular version of the 'nation of immigrants' story.

Ellis Island Immigration Museum

The Migration Museum, opened in Adelaide in 1986, was the first dedicated museum of migration in the world. It was not until the late 1980s that other immigration and emigration museums, research centres and archives slowly began to appear across

[3] John Howard wanted Australians to feel "comfortable and relaxed" about their history. Howard, quoted in Attwood, *Telling the truth about Aboriginal history*, pp. 33-34.

Europe and America.[4] Of these the United States had "the most potent site for a migration museum in Ellis Island in New York".[5] Ellis Island was the main point of disembarkation for 12 million immigrants that arrived in the United States between 1892 and 1954. The site fell into disrepair until, in 1984, plans to transform it into a major museum were approved by the Reagan Government.[6]

Historian of immigration Nancy Green argues that the development of Ellis Island as an immigration museum in the 1980s was a result of the "ethnic renaissance" in America in the previous decade, which was accompanied by a rebirth of the historiography of immigration.[7] The Ellis Island Immigration Museum Committee harnessed this burgeoning interest in immigration and family history, and began a nation-wide fundraising program for the Museum. Spearheaded by Chrysler Corporation head Lee Iacocca, the child of Italian immigrants and the epitome of the migrant success story, the fundraising drive raised over $150 million for the Museum through private donations and corporate sponsorship.[8] The 'American Immigrant Wall of Honor' was the centrepiece of the campaign, and the brainchild of Iacocca. It capitalised on the powerful potential of the island as a site of memory with direct family links to 40% of Americans, and offered them the opportunity to pay $100 to have their ancestors name inscribed permanently on the Wall.[9] Even before it opened the Museum had a huge potential visitor base, large exhibition areas, and solid buildings that still contained many objects relevant to the Island's history of migration.[10] The interpretation of main building as a path of immersive exhibitions where visitors could literally walk in the footsteps of their immigrant forebears, through the baggage room, medical inspection corridors and the imposing Great Hall where potential immigrants

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[4] See Appendix 2, 'Summary table of international heritage initiatives' in Mary Stevens, "Stories Old and New: Migration and identity in the UK heritage sector," A report for the Migration Museum Working Group, Institute for Public Policy Research, July 2009, pp. 39-40, http://www.migrationmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ippr-Stories-Old-and-New.pdf.
[5] Ibid, p. 27.
[6] Rob Perks, "The Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York," *Oral History*, vol. 19, no.1, Spring 1991, 79.
[7] Green, "A French Ellis Island?," 243.
[8] Luke Desforges and Joanne Maddern, "Front doors to freedom, portal to the past: history at the Ellis Island immigration museum, New York," *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 5, no. 3, 442.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Diana Pardue, "Ellis Island Immigration Museum," *Museum International*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2004, 23.

were interviewed, was a huge success. British oral historian Rob Perks visited the Museum soon after it opened, and wondered if "8000 pounds could be raised in Britain for a museum about immigration, let alone the 80 million pounds raised for Ellis Island".[11] The Museum became the envy of immigrant nations the world over, including Australia.

Australia "For All of Us"

Domestic politics in Australia took a significant turn to the right when, in March 1996, Keating's Labor Government was crushingly defeated in a federal election. The 'big picture' cultural reforms Keating had pursued in his five years as prime minister, including a program of national reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, the continued funding and support for institutions of multiculturalism such as the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the broader realignment of Australia as an independent player in the Asian region, changed the course of Australian history but also contributed to his government's defeat. His opponent, Liberal leader John Howard, made it clear that these reforms would not be priorities under any government he led.[12] In the midst of an economic recession, Howard was able to appeal to both loyal Liberal voters and traditional working class Labor voters, or 'Aussie battlers', with the election slogan "For All of Us", insinuating that Keating's government was only interested in minorities.[13]

In the same election that brought John Howard the prime ministership of Australia, a small-business owner from Ipswich in Queensland was elected to parliament as the Member for Oxley. In her first speech to the House of Representatives in September 1996, Pauline Hanson claimed to speak for "ordinary Australians" who like her, "want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished".[14]

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[11] Perks, "The Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York," 80.
[12] Robert Manne, *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture*. Melbourne, Vic.: Text Publishing, 2001, pp. 1-4.
[13] Ien Ang and Jon Stratton, "Multiculturalism in Crisis: The New Politics of Race and National Identity in Australia," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, no. 22, Spring 1998, 24; Attwood, *Telling the truth about Aboriginal History*, p. 33; Judith Brett, *Australian liberals and the moral middle class: from Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 188.
[14] Pauline Hanson's maiden Parlimentary speech, "Australia, Wake Up!", 10 September 1996, in Donald Horne, *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 2001, p. 276.

Her catchcry was a strong, united Australia, not dissimilar to Howard's Australia "for all of us". However, unlike Howard, who, as the leader of a mainstream political party in a democratic country could not reject the policy of multiculturalism outright, Hanson was able to fuel the backlash against it in thinly-veiled racialist terms. Her targets – unassimilable Asian immigrants, 'multiculturalists' and other 'leftist elites', and 'privileged' Aboriginals, became the scapegoats for all manner of societal ills. Hanson warned that the consequences of multiculturalism were catastrophic:

> A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. The world is full of failed and tragic examples, ranging from Ireland to Bosnia to Africa and, closer to home, Papua New Guinea. America and Great Britain are currently paying the price.[15]

It was a radical view, but one which drew the support of one in ten Queenslanders in 1996, and a massive one in four by the election of 1998.[16] Historian Peter Cochrane aligned Hanson's popularity with politicians of the past, such as Robert Menzies, who appealed to the "forgotten people".[17] But as Judith Brett has shown, there were "subtle and important differences" between Menzies' "forgotten people" and the "battlers" that Howard and Hanson targeted. Howard's "battlers" were "more clearly identified with small business, and the sense of powerlessness and grievance was stronger. And they were explicitly identified as workers".[18] Nevertheless, what the success of Howard and Hanson signified was, in the words of Jon Stratton and Ien Ang:

> ...sections of ordinary people – mostly referred to by the highly problematic term "Anglo-Celtic" Australians, or sometimes simply as "old Australia" – do not recognise themselves in multiculturalism's rosy narrative of the "new Australia".[19]

They argued that multiculturalism never in fact won the hearts and minds of "middle Australia". So, after more than two decades of broad bipartisan support, what many

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Sean Scalmer, "The Production of a Founding Event: The Case of Pauline Hanson's Maiden Parliamentary Speech," *Theory & Event*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1999, para 3: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v003/3.2scalmer.html.
[17] Peter Cochrane, "Voices of the Past in Anglo Primal Scream," *Australian*, 10 October 1996. See also Ang and Stratton, "Multiculturalism in Crisis," 23.
[18] Brett, *Australian liberals and the moral middle class*, p. 188.
[19] Ang and Stratton, "Multiculturalism in Crisis," 26.

disaffected Australians had come to view as the 'multicultural industry' began to deteriorate.[20]

The Howard Government began dismantling the institutions of multiculturalism almost immediately, with the closing of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in June 1996.[21] The Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, another Labor initiative, was also abolished, and funding for the Adult Migrant English program and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia was cut.[22] The merging of Indigenous Affairs with the portfolios of Immigration and Multiculturalism reflected the downgrading of these 'marginal' interests in the government's agenda. Howard's documented avoidance of the term 'multiculturalism' while in opposition continued into office, and he even went so far as to remove it from a joint parliamentary resolution against racism in October 1996.[23]

However, while distancing his party from Keating's multicultural discourse, Howard was careful to outwardly support Australia's cultural diversity. His government continued to revise and update multicultural policies, beginning with a 1997 discussion paper entitled *Multicultural Australia: the Way Forward* and the release of a new national multicultural policy in 1999, *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*. The focus of these updates was to ensure that "cultural diversity is a unifying voice for Australia".[24] Citizenship and individual rights and responsibilities to the State were in his estimation more productive and relevant to modern Australia than the cultural

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[20] A good example of this attitude Graeme Campell and Mark Uhlman's 1995 publication *Australia Betrayed* (Carlisle, Western Australia: Foundation Press). The authors argued "Intellectual corruption and conformity has been deeply entrenched and large amounts of public funds have been siphoned into the pockets of those who posture as defenders of minorities and the disadvantaged", vii.

[21] Ang and Stratton, "Multiculturalism in Crisis," 24; See also Gwenda Tavan, "John Howard's multicultural paradox," paper delivered to the 'John Howard's Decade' Conference, Australian National University, Canberra, 3-4 March 2006, p. 7, http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FIMYI6%22.

[22] Tavan, "John Howard's multicultural paradox," p. 7.

[23] Ang and Stratton, "Multiculturalism in Crisis," 24.

[24] Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *A new agenda for a multicultural Australia*, Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1999, p. 4. See also National Multicultural Advisory Council and Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *Multicultural Australia: the way forward*, Belconnen, ACT: The Advisory Council, 1997.

rights of ethnic groups. As a result, the language of social cohesion, harmony and tolerance came to typify the ambivalence with which Howard approached multicultural policy during his prime ministership.[25]

Howard hesitated to denounce Pauline Hanson's anti-immigration, anti-Aboriginal, anti-multicultural views outright for fear of alienating those voters who may have sympathised with them. However, one self-identifying "multiculturalist", the Victorian Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett, reacted decisively. In November 1996, amidst the onset of Hanson-fever, he led a motion in the Victorian Parliament to reaffirm support for non-discriminatory immigration policies and to endorse cultural diversity, stating:

> Australia today would not be where it is in terms of its social and financial strengths without the contribution of many who have settled in this country. I am a strong supporter of immigration and a higher immigration program and I want to see this country grow, I want to see its population grow and I want to see this country made up of peoples, wherever they come from, who appreciate this environment.[26]

The decision to fund an Immigration Museum for Melbourne at this politically volatile time was a result of Kennett's personal conviction in the importance of the project, and the positive spin on multicultural Victoria that was such a trademark of his years in office. However the idea for an immigration museum in Victoria had a longer history.

Victoria: The Multicultural Capital

Of all the Australian states, Victoria claims to be the most multicultural. The mix of nations that flooded the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s is often celebrated as the birthplace of multicultural Australia, and even the convict era is seen as more diverse in character with a stronger Irish influence than the English-dominated New South Wales.[27] After the Second World War Victoria was home to the largest of the migrant camps, Bonegilla, in which approximately 320,000 post-war migrants lived for some

[25] See Tavan, "John Howard's multicultural paradox," p. 14.
[26] "State Backs migration," 13 November 1996, *Australian*, p. 4.
[27] Claire Miller, "A cultural kaleidoscope," *Age*, 24 July 2005.

time.[28] The size and potential political sway of the communities formed by these migrants meant that Victoria was the only state where the Labor Party established ethnic branches.[29] Victoria also lays claim to some of the most influential people in the development of non-discriminatory immigration policies and multiculturalism, including the Immigration Reform Group which organised resistance to the White Australia policy in the 1960s; lawyer Frank Galbally, whose important 'Review of *Migrant Services and Programs Report* of 1978 prompted an expansion of multicultural services; and Malcolm Fraser, who as Prime Minister of Australia from 1975 to 1983, embedded multicultural policies into government institutions and oversaw a program of refugee arrivals from Vietnam.[30] It is not surprising that "The Multicultural Capital" was recently suggested as the state's new slogan.[31]

Victoria, and particularly Melbourne, also has important links to the historiography of immigration and migration heritage in Australia, stemming largely from post-war migrant groups. The Italian Historical Society, established in 1980, was a major force in advocating the importance of culturally diverse histories in mainstream institutions such as the State Library of Victoria.[32] The city's long-established Chinese community was recognised with State government funding for a Chinese Museum in 1985 as a part of Victoria's sesquicentenary.[33] Another museum of Chinese-Australian history opened in Bendigo in 1991.[34] Melbourne is home to two major Jewish museums, the Jewish Museum of Australia, established in 1982, and the Jewish Holocaust Centre which opened in 1984. The Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria is both the oldest and the largest Greek organisation in Australia, having been

[28] Persian, "Bonegilla: A failed narrative," p. 64.
[29] Andrew Jakubowicz, 'Victoria discovers multiculturalism' in "Making Multicultural Australia for the 21st Century", http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/library/media/Timeline-Commentary/id/156.-Victoria-discovers-multiculturalism--.
[30] Ibid.
[31] John Masanauskas, "Nick Kotsiras suggests Victoria – The Multicultural Capital on number plates," *Herald Sun*, 8 September 2011.
[32] See Tom Griffiths, "Investing in the State: Victoria's Italians," in Birtley and McQueen (eds), *New Responsibilities: Documenting multicultural Australia*, pp. 63-66.
[33] See The Chinese Museum website, http://www.chinesemuseum.com.au/.
[34] See the Golden Dragon Museum website, http://www.goldendragonmuseum.org/.

established in 1897.[35] If, as Andrew Jakubowicz asserts, Victoria "became and remains the standard bearer for multicultural policies", it can also be seen as the benchmark for ethno-specific museums, community heritage organisations and their partnerships with state institutions.[36]

The idea of an immigration museum in Victoria arose at the same time as these other initiatives. Historian Michael Cigler, who edited the first collection of works on migrant communities in Australia, was himself a former DP and resident of Bonegilla.[37] In 1984, he and other former residents formed a committee to transform what was left of the migrant camp into an immigration museum.[38] The Bonegilla Immigration Museum Committee was active for almost a decade, during which time they received letters from many former Bonegilla residents and their children requesting information or lending support to the proposed museum. However, despite receiving in-principle support from the Minister for Immigration, Chris Hurford, in 1986, the Committee's 1987 application for Bicentennial funding was rejected, and the project remained stalled until the 2000s.[39]

One major achievement of the Committee was the listing of Bonegilla's Block 19, which included the last 28 huts from the original migrant camp, on the Register of the National Estate in 1990.[40] They also rallied support and interest in Victoria's migrant heritage that ran across and between ethnic groups. Bonegilla reunions, exhibitions, plays and histories organised and created from the mid-1980s onward attest to this renewed interest in Victoria's post-war migrant experience.[41] In her account of Bonegilla as a site of memory Jayne Persian notes that by 1995, when the ABC

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[35] Christos N. Fifis, "A Brief Outline of the History of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria," 2010, http://www.greekcommunity.com.au/gocmv_public/index.php/en/about-us/history.
[36] Jakubowicz, 'Victoria discovers multiculturalism' in "Making Multicultural Australia for the 21st Century."
[37] The Australian Ethnic Heritage Series was made up of sixteen books, published between 1983 and 1988. It is discussed in the Introduction, pp. 31-32.
[38] Persian, "Bonegilla: a failed narrative," 68.
[39] Ibid, 72.
[40] Ibid, 73.
[41] Ibid, 70. See also Sluga, "Bonegilla and migrant dreaming."

produced a ten-part series based on the site and its residents, Bonegilla had become a "national story" in a "peak period of commemorating migration".[42]

The search for Australia's Ellis Island

Ellis Island loomed large in attempts to create an immigration museum in Victoria. The Bonegilla Immigration Museum Committee suggested a possible linkage with the Ellis Island Committee as early as 1987.[43] However, unlike Bonegilla, the power of Ellis Island Immigration Museum (EIIM) lay in its role as a site of arrival and migrant processing – the poignant first landfall for migrants in a new land. Those who had lived at Bonegilla experienced this first landfall at Station Pier in Port Melbourne, a site which, remarkably, was continually in use as a passenger pier from 1854 until the late 1970s. Station Pier was often described as "Australia's Ellis Island", as in this newspaper editorial in *The Sunday Age* from 1994:

> New York has its Ellis Island. England its Tilbury. Hong Kong its Fragrant Harbor and Canada its Vancouver Bay. When a historian thinks of the symbolic – and actual – entry point for millions of people into Australia, he cannot go past Melbourne's Station Pier.[44]

With the election of Jeff Kennett as Premier in 1992 a major overhaul of Museum Victoria, including plans for the new Melbourne Museum to open at Carlton Gardens by 2000. This new museum was to incorporate the state's migration history, and curators had already begun to prepare community agreements, organise collaborative projects and secure loans of objects.[45] However, plans soon surfaced for a separate museum of immigration. *Herald Sun* journalist Alan Howe wrote to Kennett in 1994 with the suggestion and has since claimed this letter to be the catalyst for the museum.[46] Whether or not this is the case, Howe's articulation of his motives for doing so are revealing:

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[42] Persian, "Bonegilla: a failed narrative," 73.
[43] Ibid, 68.
[44] Nicholas Cree, quoted in Larry Schwartz, "Heaven's Gate," *Sunday Age*, 2 July 1994, p. 2.
[45] See Chapter 4, pp. 179-180.
[46] Alan Howe, "We are all in this nation's mix," *Herald Sun*, 21 February 2011; John Masanauskas, "Museum a new home for migrant memories," *Herald Sun*, 13 November 1998.

> When I wrote to then premier Jeff Kennett in 1994 suggesting we build an Immigration Museum, I saw it as celebrating the greatest, most successful mass migration the world had seen... Most mass migrations have seen deep flaws... Ours, on the other hand, has been extraordinarily successful. I wanted that story told.[47]

Howe, who migrated from England in 1985, wanted a proud Australian history of peaceful immigration and nation-building. This celebratory approach may seem on the surface a throw-back to the enrichment narrative of multicultural discourse in the 1980s. However, Howe's version of the immigrant success story was one of cohesion and compliance, in which religious and cultural differences were viewed with suspicion and Aboriginal history was conveniently erased. It therefore had more in common with Howard's proud and comfortable version of Australian history. Rather than celebrating diverse cultures, the 'successful nation of immigrants' story suggests that the repression of difference has been the key to Australia's achievements (unlike the unfortunate Canada, where "dominant migrant groups may yet rip it asunder", or America, whose immigration history has been "tarnished by slavery"). When Howe recounted these events in 2011, it was the potential difficulty of integrating large amounts of Muslim immigrants that sparked his patriotic fervour. He concluded that migrants of any origin were welcome, provided they respect the "Christian values" of Australia and the "trusted words of our constitution".[48]

Whether as a result of Howe's letter, or, more likely, of the slow build-up of community support for the idea, sparked by groups such as the Bonegilla Committee, a feasibility study into an immigration museum at Station Pier began in 1994. A Victorian Government submission to the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee (CFAC) in the same year proposed Station Pier as "the ideal site for a national Museum of

[47] Howe, "We are all in this nation's mix."

[48] There is some irony in Howe's adoption of a "governing" persona, protecting supposedly "Australian" values and traditions, as when he proposed an immigration museum in 1994 he was not yet an Australian citizen.

Migration", perhaps testing the waters for federal funding.[49] The CFAC's report reproduced a section of the submission, and noted:

> The documentation, the images and the great human story could be brought together, much in the way that the United States of America celebrates its immigrant history in the renovated reception centre on Ellis Island...[50]

However, the CFAC thought it best that the national migrant story be documented and interpreted though electronic media and the CD-ROM. When Kennett visited EIIM while in New York in February 1995, it seemed that the original Victorian migration museum plan would soon be realised.[51] A further link was made between the two sites of arrival when, shortly after Kennett's visit, an exhibition about Greek women migrants who arrived at Station Pier in Port Melbourne was exhibited at Ellis Island.[52] The superintendant of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, Anne Belkov, reportedly stated:

> They are going to build an immigration museum in Melbourne and we at Ellis Island will be able to help with that, as Ellis Island is the premier immigration museum in the world.[53]

However, by June 1996 the Station Pier plan had fallen into doubt. A state government proposal for a museum of Greek history in the impressive Old Customs House building on Flinders Street (which had previously been set aside for an art gallery) gained approval from Greek government representatives in Australia.[54] Kennett confirmed in August that a Hellenic Archaeological Museum was to be one of Melbourne's "key tourist attractions" in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, and would also "enhance understanding of the values, culture and traditions of Greek history".[55] At

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[49] The submission was presented by the Victorian Minister for Planning, Rob Maclellan. An excerpt is reproduced in the Committee's report: Council of Australian Governments, Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee, *2001, A report from Australia: A Report to the Council of Australian Governments by the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994, p. 57.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Raymond Gill, "Station Pier Gets Inspiration From Afar," *Age*, 28 February 1995, p. 20.
[52] The exhibition, *The Brides*, was first displayed at Monash University in 1993, and was curated by Srebrenka Kunek and based on her doctoral research. See Srebrenka Kunek, "Wives, brides and single women: Greek female migration to Australia in the post-World War II period, 1945 to 1973," PhD Thesis, Monash University, 1995.
[53] Anne Belkov, quoted in Gill, "Station Pier Gets Inspiration From Afar."
[54] Leon Gettler, "Greek plan for Customs House," *Age*, 12 June 1996, p. 9.
[55] Farah Farouque, "Pieces of Greece coming our way," *Age*, 2 August 1996, p. 4.

the same time, a proposal to house the immigration museum on the second floor of the Customs House building was being assessed. The co-habitation of the two museums in the same building was confirmed later that month.[56]

The Immigration Museum project at Old Customs House was accomplished in just two years, a process one curator has described as "an insane undertaking".[57] This feat included the restoration of the heritage building, and the research, development and construction of a suite of opening exhibitions. Museum staff were under a great deal of pressure to deliver the Immigration Museum on time and on budget as Kennett was adamant that it would be ready for the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Conference in October 1998.[58] Despite delays caused by the Webb Dock dispute, which closed all Victorian ports, and the Melbourne gas crisis in late September, the Museum was delayed altogether by only four weeks. Because of this, there was a 'soft-opening' for the ICOM Conference in October, followed by an official public opening of the Museum in November. From then on, Australia was home to two museums of migration, one a product of the 1980s, and one of the late 1990s. But while America's Ellis Island certainly influenced the desire for an immigration museum in Melbourne, it was Australia's first museum of migration in Adelaide which had a more significant effect on the presentation of Australia's migration history.

The Immigration Museum: democratising the migration story

As well as dictating the location and subject of this new museum, Jeff Kennett also secured the director of his choice: Anna Malgorzewicz. She had previously been curator of Migration and Settlement at MV and was later head of its History Department. Malgorzewicz had also co-curated the highly influential and important exhibition *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton*.[59] Her return to Melbourne as the Director of the Immigration Museum (IMM) in 1997 connects its history with the

[56] Richard Gillespie, "The Immigration Museum" in Carolyn Rasmussen (ed), *A museum for the people: a history of Museum Victoria and its predecessors, 1854 – 2000*, Carlton, Vic.: Scribe Publications, 2001, p. 364.
[57] McFadzean, Interview.
[58] Gillespie, "The Immigration Museum," p. 364.
[59] Ibid, p. 363. Malgorzewicz left Museum Victoria in 1993 to direct the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery.

MMSA in Adelaide, where Malgorzewicz had embarked on her first museum job back in 1985. She remembers how her "dream position of a lifetime" began:

> It started with me and a blank piece of paper and a directive, from the then premier of Victoria... it was very much a museum that did have a political beginning, and a political brief. And the brief was that the Museum was to be about the immigration process and not immigrants.[60]

While Malgorzewicz agreed that the IMM should be inclusive, she was troubled by its location next to the "incredibly exclusive" Hellenic Archaeological Museum. The two institutions were completely separate in terms of governance, yet their shared premises meant that they were inevitably linked in the eyes of the public. For Moya McFadzean, who had been Senior Curator of Australian Society and Technology at MV since 1995 and was appointed as co-ordinating curator of the IMM project in 1996, it was "a dictate we had to deal with".[61] All were frankly relieved when, after a short time, the loans of archaeological material from the Greek government dried up, and the top floor occupied by the Hellenic Antiquities Museum was vacated. This gave the Immigration Museum much-needed space for temporary exhibits.[62]

What shaped the thinking about the IMM, both in the eyes of Kennett, and then subsequently in the approach of Malgorzewicz and the rest of the project team, was what it *would not* be. It was conceived of in opposition to what had come before, namely, the MMSA in Adelaide, and its association with multiculturalism. As McFadzean reflected:

> My sense of reading that museum [the MMSA] in the early days was that it was very much a proactive multicultural project - it was about trying to broaden representation from what was considered the dominant culture... Ten years

[60] Malgorzewicz, Interview.
[61] McFadzean, Interview.
[62] The Hellenic Archaeological Museum was never officially closed. The 2000/2001 Museums Council of Victoria Annual Report notes that "The Victorian Government is negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with the Greek Government in relation to the Hellenic Antiquities Museum. A number of options for future exhibitions are being considered." However, there is no mention of the museum in subsequent annual reports. See Museums Council of Victoria, *Annual Report 2000/2001*, p. 29: http://museumvictoria.com.au/about/corporate-information/annual-reports/, Accessed 21/8/2012.

> later we were trying to democratise the migration story and to position for example English migration as one of many migrant cultural stories.[63]

The approach of the IMM team was characterised by this concern to appeal to the mainstream or dominant Anglo culture. Richard Gillespie, who was one of the curators at MV, explains:

> The emphasis on multiculturalism had had the unintended consequence of displacing the experiences of British and Irish immigrants from mainstream immigration history, and this was reflected in public perceptions that immigration history was only relevant to people not of Anglo-Celtic origin.[64]

In appealing to this section of the population – people who had not previously been seen as "multicultural" or "diverse" - the IMM was harnessing a broader shift in Australian society. Jon Stratton has argued that the late 1990s marked a period of "British self-ethnicisation" in Australia, prompted by the movement of the Hawke/Keating Governments in the late 1980s and early 1990s to remove pre-existing privileges held by British-Australians:

> Politically speaking, British self-ethnicisation has to do with people who identify as being of British background feeling that they have lost a status, and an entitlement that was naturally theirs. Self-ethnicisation is an attempt to gain a new status, this time one that places British-Australians on an equivalence with other ethnic groups in Australia.[65]

Thus people like Alan Howe, "invisible immigrants" who may not have felt the language of "multiculturalism" applied to them, sought to redefine their identity and culture in opposition to the mainstream. Stratton cites the phenomenon of the "BritFest", a British cultural festival that began in Sydney in 1996, as an example of British self-ethnicisation.[66] The democratisation of the 'nation of immigrants' narrative at the IMM capitalised on this shift. A new migration museum was thus an opportunity to reposition immigration history, and make it relevant to all Victorians.

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[63] McFadzean, Interview.
[64] Gillespie, "The Immigration Museum," p. 364.
[65] Stratton, "Not Just Another Multicultural Story," 24. This loss of privilege was both symbolic, such as the repositioning of Australia as part of the Asia region under Keating, and practical, such as the removal of British residents' automatic right to vote in Australian elections in 1984 under the Hawke Government.
[66] Ibid, 45.

Curators also shared the strong desire to bring those seen as 'minorities' into a mainstream historical narrative. The key staff of the IMM all had experience in organisations which represented small communities. Maria Tence, Manager of the *Access Gallery*, had previously founded the Italian Historical Society and managed it for a number of years. She understood "how hard it was to be represented in a mainstream institution" and saw her role at the IMM as one where she could reduce those barriers.[67] Moya McFadzean had been working for MV since 1995, but before then had managed a regional museum in Victoria, where her main constituency was local community groups.[68] Anna Malgorzewicz started her museum career at the MMSA in Adelaide, where community work in its first years was undertaken almost exclusively with non-English speaking groups. Manager Padmini Sebastian was the odd one out in that her professional background was in the performing arts.[69] She had arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1984 when her family fled the civil war in Sri Lanka, and thus had a personal connection to the work of the Museum.[70] All these women knew what it was like to try and effect change from outside mainstream institutions. Kennett's backing for a large and well-funded immigration museum gave them the opportunity to start with a fresh slate, and to create the type of museum they thought was lacking in the broader Australian museum scene. It was also a precious chance to demonstrate the positive effects of Australia's cultural diversity in a political climate where immigration and multiculturalism were under attack.[71]

The South Australian Government had wanted an "ethnic museum" in Adelaide in the early 1980s. But in Melbourne in the late 1990s, what the Victorian Premier requested was more akin to a "non-ethnic" museum, one that united all Victorians though their shared migration experiences and family histories. This marked an important shift towards the democratisation of the 'nation of immigrants', in which fourth and fifth generation Australians were encouraged to share in a proud, successful and national

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[67] Maria Tence, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 7 October 2009, Melbourne, Australia.
[68] Museum Victoria, Staff Biographies, "Moya McFadzean, Senior Curator, Migration," http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections-research/our-research/history-amp-technology/staff/moya-mcfadzean/.
[69] Malgorzewicz, Interview.
[70] Liz Cincotta, "Passage to Australia," *Age*, 19 June 2008.
[71] McFadzean, Interview.

history of immigration. Planning documents reveal that the team intended to appeal to both "special audiences and broader audiences" by "diluting the general view that the Museum is overtly and primarily about multiculturalism".[72] Instead, the IMM would "promote our cultural diversity and resulting Australian identity".[73] These ideas informed the communication objective of the museum: "there is an immigration experience in the life or family history of all non-Indigenous Australians".[74] Curators hoped to attract Australians who might not consider themselves migrants, but who had a keen interest in their ancestry and heritage. The formative audience evaluation carried out the year before the Museum opened also reflects this concern. Of the 27 individuals interviewed, 8 were described as first generation Australians, just 4 were second generation Australians, and a majority, 15, were "third or more" generation Australians.[75]

The other crucial part of the Museum's philosophy was the acknowledgement that "Aboriginal people do not consider themselves to be immigrants".[76] By respecting the Aboriginal community's wishes to be considered as non-migrants, the exhibition team recognised that they were openly privileging one group's right to self-definition over all others.[77] This decision positioned Aboriginal people as the "first Victorians", and the impact of immigration on their lives and family histories was woven throughout the permanent galleries.

Importantly, although they planned to incorporate the mainstream into their definition of "immigrants", the exhibition team, like almost all migration exhibition curators before them, also wished to challenge assumptions about Australian identity and "deal

[72] Maria Tence, "Immigration Museum, Community Consultation Philosophy and Strategy," 9 April 1998, p. 10.
[73] Ibid, quoting Immigration Museum "Visitor Experience Brief," 23 April 1997, p. 4.
[74] Malgorzewicz, Interview; Gillespie, "The Immigration Museum," p. 364.
[75] Museum Victoria, "Immigration Museum Formative Evaluation," December 1997, p. 4.
[76] Museum Victoria, "Immigration Museum and Hellenic Archaeological Museum, Exhibition Consultant Brief & Contract, Version 2," 25 August 1997. Section 4, Part 2, p. 6.
[77] Margaret Griffith, David Demant, Yolande Kerridge, David Jay, Geoff Moore and John Stewart, "Immigration Museum and Hellenic Archaeological Museum, Audience Profile," 19 September 1997, para 4.3, also 'Key Issues' No.1, 'Definition of "migrant".

seriously with 'mainstream Australia's' concerns about newer waves of migrants".[78] This intention emerged especially in the Museum's *Leavings* gallery, as we shall see. The choice to adopt a thematic rather than a chronological structure to the galleries was a strategy the team employed to demonstrate commonalities across the migration experiences of different groups and generations. Consultation and curatorial meetings resulted in the selection of six interlocking themes that would structure the permanent galleries: leavings, journeys, arrivals, settlings, impacts and reunions.[79]

The site and galleries

The layout of the Immigration Museum Melbourne is very much the same today as it was when the museum opened in 1998. With the exception of the top floor (which originally housed the Hellenic Archaeological Museum), and Gallery 4 *Impacts*, which was replaced by the exhibition *Getting In* in 2003, the original galleries are intact. As with most museums, objects, stories and sometimes whole cases are periodically rotated, removed and renovated. My analysis focuses on the four main first floor galleries, and the *Access Gallery*, as they were in 1998.

Visitors today still enter the museum from the Flinders Street main doors or from the rear of the building via the Tribute Garden, a public artwork listing the names of Victoria's migrants. The ground floor has no exhibition space of its own, rather, its immaculately restored black and white marble floor and high ceilings make it appear as an exhibition of the building itself – the Grand Foyer of the old Customs House in all its splendour. The rooms on this level include an atrium and theatrette, an Education Centre for visiting school groups and the Sarah and Baillieu Myer Discovery Centre, where visitors can make use of museum resources to trace their own family histories. A café and a shop next door offer the chance to relax and unwind. Visitors are greeted at the main desk, issued with tickets, and directed up the spiral staircase to the exhibition galleries (see Figure 8).

[78] Ibid, 'Key Issues' No.2, 'Community attitudes to migrants'.
[79] Museum Victoria, "Immigration Museum and Hellenic Archaeological Museum, Exhibition Consultant Brief & Contract, Version 2," Section 4, Part 2, p. 2.

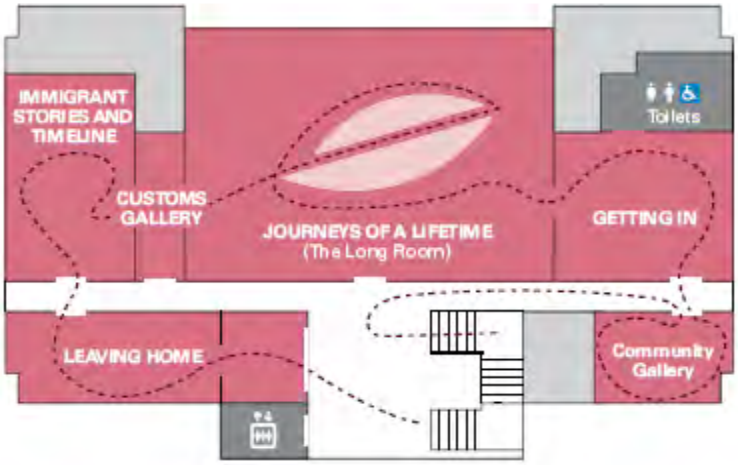

Figure 8: This map shows the layout of the first floor galleries. 'Getting In' (2003) is where 'Impacts' originally was. The 'Access Gallery' was renamed the 'Community Gallery' in 2005. 'Immigrant Stories and Timeline' was originally called 'Settlings'. Immigration Museum Visitor Guide PDF, c2010: http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/visiting/.

Leaving Home

> *Luggage lies at the heart of the migration experience. It is a symbol of both what is brought and what is left behind. It contains peoples hopes and fears, as they leave one life and begin another.*[80]

These are the first words that visitors encounter after climbing the spiral staircase and approaching the *Leaving Home* gallery. Under the words, in a perspex case, are three pieces of luggage, labelled with the name of their owner, their country of origin and the date of their journey to Victoria. There is small wooden case brought by an Italian man from Italy in 1950, the kind you might find in the family attic. A suitcase brought by a Croatian woman in 2002 looks nearly new, and sits strangely between the others. The oldest is a sturdy wooden trunk brought by an Irish man in 1887. It was packed with all his worldly possessions over a century ago.

The suitcase as a metaphor for the journey that unites all immigrants is one that has been used in nearly all exhibitions about migration, and it is not hard to see why. As

[80] Gallery 1, 'Luggage' text, Moya McFadzean, Richard Gillespie, Ruth McLean and Matthew Churchward, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder, c1998.

McFadzean points out, "suitcases are evocative, so we are going to collect them!"[81] Like shoes, or personal belongings such as combs, suitcases are a democratising object. Almost everyone has owned or used one. They also make great design pieces – stacks of suitcases, like those seen at EIIM, in *Passengers* at the ANMM and in the 1995 NMA exhibition *Tolerance*, look picturesque and poignantly convey the sheer amount of luggage that is part of most human migrations. At the IMM the suitcases were an example of a technique used throughout the first gallery – the exhibition of like objects from different times as a collection. These little collections conveyed the similar reasons people had migrated to Victoria, including 'War and Conflict', 'Family', 'Disaster', 'A Better Life' and 'Freedom'. Another example is a display of children's toys, for which the label read:

> *Toys brought by children help maintain a sense of community with their new homeland.*
> *Toys brought by adults evoke precious memories of the past.*
> *Toys sent by grandparents help sustain a child's links to distant loved ones.*

The objects were accompanied with these explanatory labels:

> *Nissen hut, brought to Australia by an English boy, 1945.*
> *Gaucho doll and costume, sent to Argentinian children in Melbourne by their grandmother, 1960s.*
> *Paper doll's dresses made in the 1940s by an Italian child, even though her parents were too poor to buy her a doll.*
> *Doll, brought from Bavaria, 19th century.*
> *'Game Boy' electronic game, 1990s.*[82]

Nearly all of the chosen toys had provenance – that is, curators knew where they came from, who used them, and why they were significant to those individuals. The Game Boy was the odd one out, apparently belonging to no one. Perhaps it was displayed to catch the attention of younger visitors, many of whom would have owned one. Other information was subtly communicated by these labels. The attention to class, such as in the description of the Italian child's paper doll and her parents' poverty, and the links to home, such as the Gaucho doll sent to children in Melbourne by their grandmother in Argentina were all carefully selected. These choices were recorded in

[81] McFadzean, Interview.
[82] Gallery 1, 'Toys and Memories' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

what McFadzean calls the "content matrix". Similar to the diversity checklist used at the MMSA in Adelaide, the content matrix was a grid to track the type of objects and stories proposed for the exhibitions. Across the top of the grid curators made columns to record the gender, age, country of origin, religion, motivation for leaving, place of settlement, regional or urban location, and occupation of proposed subjects.[83]

Whereas in the 1980s the main concern of migration history curators in Adelaide was to highlight class and gender, by the late 1990s in Melbourne there was a need to track even more ways of defining identity. This cross-historical method of object display could tick multiple boxes in the content matrix, as well as being aesthetically pleasing. People love collections. In museums this style perhaps had more in common with the natural sciences, where types of insects, birds or other specimens are grouped and exhibited together. In *Leaving Home*, mini collections of luggage, toys, costumes, and other keepsakes, were approachable, comparable and easily understood.

The other element of *Leaving Home* was a film. The design report described this as a "choreographed sequence of soundscapes, photographs and footage" that "presents visitors with a concentrated experience of immigration to Victoria over the past two centuries, whilst at the same time evoking some of the larger themes of immigration".[84] Images of conflict and terror from East Timor, Nazi Germany, the Tiananmen Square massacre and Northern Ireland were confronting. Others were positive, showing families happily reunited. Formative evaluation from December 1997 tested these images on a prospective audience, and concluded that they were effective in eliciting an emotional response and therefore could potentially challenge "prevalent sanitised views of immigration".[85] Curators wanted to go beyond the safe, happy image of the new migrant in sunny Australia, and instead reveal the trauma and dislocation that are often part of the experience of migration.

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[83] McFadzean, Interview.
[84] IMHAM Immigration Museum & Hellenic Archaeological Museum, Museum Victoria, *Developed Design Report For proposed Immigration Museum*, Cunningham Martyn Design, 31 March 1998, para 3.3 Gallery 1.
[85] Museum Victoria, *Immigration Museum Formative Evaluation*, December 1997, p. 2.

The message of *Leaving Home* was that all migrants, no matter how they came and what they arrived with, all endured the separation and uncertainty of the journey to Australia. All are essentially the same; all are pursuing a better future. By displacing personal stories from their immediate historical and political contexts, and displaying objects from different time periods alongside one another, the issue of *when* migrants arrived in Australia was rendered irrelevant.

Settlings

Gallery 2 was a larger lighter space where visitors could explore the experience of migrants through individual's stories and objects. Around the walls of the room ran a timeline of the history of migration to Victoria decade-by-decade. The introductory text reiterated the message that immigration is an inclusive history, involving everyone:

> *Immigration is about us all – those who were here and those who came.*
> *Everyone has a story to tell – about ourselves, our families, friends and ancestors.*
> *It is in the telling of these stories that we can begin to understand Victoria's rich histories.*[86]

Formative evaluation carried out in December 1997 found that Gallery 2 received a "muted response", and concluded that:

> …it is critical to make it clear from the start that the objects tell an individual story about immigration and to avoid the objects being seen as metaphors of multiculturalism.

To avoid this connotation the evaluation recommended that "photos and objects should be attributed to individual people, in order to contextualise them in general" and to "give them a human, personal context specifically".[87] The enclosure of objects within five separate cases, and panels accompanying them relating to a particular migrant's story, was no doubt shaped by this feedback.

At the rear of the room stood a large loom for weaving textiles. It was donated to MV in 1996 by Anna Apinis, an immigrant from Latvia, and tells an incredible story of post-

[86] Gallery 2, 'Settlings', introductory text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[87] *Immigration Museum Formative Evaluation*, December 1997, p. 2.

war migration, having been made from discarded material in a German DP camp and then transported to Australia. Its display also highlighted the "cultural maintenance and spiritual solace" offered by the loom for the Apinis family, who continued to use it until it was donated to the museum.[88] The other spotlight stories were displayed in tall cases spaced throughout the gallery, and were illustrated by smaller objects such as photographs, personal keepsakes and diaries. The mix of well-known and little known Australians included Sidney Myer, whose family story told of chain migration and the founding of the now-famous Myer Emporium; the Chen/Weng family, which was about multi-generational immigration; the Jackomos family, which was formed when Greek immigrant Alick Jackomos married Merle Morgan, an Aboriginal woman; and Susannah Nicholls, who kept diaries recording her experience of migrating under the Empire Settlement Scheme. Like the first gallery, sounds accompanied the stories, from a soundscape of "weaving effects" near the loom to a theatrical recreation of Susannah Nicholls' diaries, read aloud on a looped recording.[89] These personal stories represented each significant period of immigration to Victoria.

An Indigenous perspective ran throughout *Settlings*, both in the Jackamos' story and in the timeline. The heightened awareness and acceptance of the traumatic history of Aboriginal dispossession in the late 1990s may be the reason why Malgorzewicz and her team did not stridently confront the "colonisation or invasion" problem, as previous migration exhibitions had done. They instead wove a shared history of co-existence, one that acknowledged the dispossession of Indigenous Australians but also made room for some positive stories. [90] The relationship of Alick Jackomo, the son of Greek migrants who arrived after the First World War, and Merle Morgan, whose parents were from the Yorta Yorta people who lived along the Murray River near

[88] The loom was on display until 2010, when it was dismantled and the spotlight replaced by the story of an Italian migrant and her knitting machine. Many visitors still ask after it, which prompted the museum to post an explanation as to its whereabouts on their website. See http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/your-questions/latvian-loom/.

[89] *Developed Design Report For proposed Immigration Museum*, Cunningham Martyn Design, 31 March 1998, para 3.4, Gallery 2.

[90] This approach mirrored the historiography. For an account of how the 'big truths' of Aboriginal dispossession and child removal were established, nuanced, and challenged in this period see Peter Read, "Clio or Janus? Historians and the Stolen Generations," *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 118, 2002, 54-60.

Echuca, provided the perfect opportunity to explore these complexities. Merle and Alick first met on a train to Melbourne in 1950. After a brief courtship they married, had children, and became active members in Aboriginal political movements in Victoria over the next four decades (for which they each earned a Medal of the Order of Australia).[91] In the display, based on their oral history testimony, Merle and Alick described their marriage as "cross-cultural", and told of their visits to each others' traditional homes of Kostellorizo and the Yorta Yorta lands. Alick's parent's migration experience was typical of the chain migrations of many Greek families in Victoria. But Merle's was different. As well as being a "first Australian", she too was a migrant who had moved from her ancestral 'home lands'. As such, the story suggested the limitations of the Museum's statement that "there is an immigration experience in the life or family history of all *non-Indigenous* Victorians", while still preserving the place of Indigenous people as the "first Australians". However, the wider implications of the policies that affected Merle's family, such as the denial of citizenship, were largely restricted to the timeline in the gallery.

The timeline was the only part of the IMM to specifically address changing policies related to immigration and settlement. It was applied in a strip mural design to the walls at about shoulder height. Summaries of each decade from the 1830s to the present were illustrated by newspaper snippets, advertisements and posters from the different time periods. The first read:

> *In the beginning, Bunjil created this land and the life within it. He created people and gave them law.*
> *Port Phillip Bay is formed about 10,000 years ago.*
> *Convict transportation from Britain to New South Wales starts in 1788.*
> *From 1803 to 1835, Wathaurong people shelter William Buckley, an escapee from a failed convict settlement at Sorrento.*
> *By the late 1820s, British people are trekking overland from New South Wales.*
> *Whaling and sealing activity is thriving along the coast in the 1820s.*[92]

[91] Museum Victoria holds the digital tapes of their interview with the Jackomos. See http://136.154.202.60/collections/items/1173028/interview-alick-merle-jackomos-digital-audio-tape-6-oct-1998.

[92] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary pre-1830, Mc Fadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

A complex history emerged from the brief sketches – one of comings and goings, trade, exploration, shelter and contact. Throughout each decade the ongoing impact of these movements on those who were already in Victoria was also revealed. Victoria, and the city of Melbourne within it, developed as part of an empire, one that encouraged emigration from the old land to the 'new'. The immigration of the Chinese in the 1850s and the subsequent taxes imposed upon them accounted for the beginnings of a new community rather than just isolated incidents of violence and discrimination on the goldfields. The continued policing of the Indigenous inhabitants, their dispossession and loss of freedoms underlay the success of the economic boom gradually building towards the "Marvellous Melbourne" of the 1880s.[93] Subsequent decade summaries include international events, such as the Canadian immigration restrictions at the turn of the century which encouraged more people to choose Australia, or the Big Brother Movement which organised for English schoolboys to live and work on Victorian farms.[94] Sometimes, as the decade summaries note, more immigrants left Australia than arrived.[95] This aspect of immigration history is often overlooked, leaving visitors with the impression that arrival in Australia marks a happy ending for all hopeful immigrants. Of course, this is not the case, but it was only in the timeline that migrants who left were mentioned.

The complexities of Australia's changing immigration policies, however, were difficult to summarise. The 1950s panel read:

> *Australia signs immigration agreements with more than 20 European countries, establishing immigration assistance and reunion schemes.*
> *British immigration is still favoured, being promoted through community schemes such as 'Bring Out a Briton.'*
> *In 1955, the number of post-war immigrants to Australia reaches one million.*
> *Asian refugees and longstanding Asian residents can apply for permanent residency.*
> *Non-European spouses of Australian citizens can apply for naturalization.*

[93] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary 1860s, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[94] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary 1900s and 1920s, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[95] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary 1930s, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

In 1958, the Migration Act abolishes the Dictation Test.[96]

McFadzean later conceded that the "elephant in the room" was the White Australia Policy, and that it and other complex issues were afforded little space in the first iteration of the galleries.[97] Apart from this small mention in the timeline, there was only one other text panel that explained immigration restriction. It was located in a corridor between Galleries 2 and 3, and included as part of the history of the Customs House building:

> *From 1901 customs officers were given the power to exclude all non-Europeans. In the face of international criticism, officials looked for a way to exclude people without making it seem due to race. The answer was the notorious Dictation Test. Immigrants could be required to pass a language test in any European language. If they failed, they were refused entry. Maltese applicants were given a test in Dutch. A political activist who spoke several European languages eventually failed when he was tested in Gaelic. This technique continued to be used by Customs until 1958.* [98]

This succinct text contrasts starkly to the opening exhibitions of the MMSA in Adelaide in 1986, where racially discriminatory immigration policies were featured in an interactive fashion with the White Australia Walk game. Perhaps, in trying to present a positive and inclusive history, it was difficult for the curators at the IMM to come to terms with the highly political nature of immigration policy. The final decade summary in the timeline, for the 1990s, noted "in a period of economic uncertainty, immigration remains a contentious issue".[99] Looking back through the decades, with their accompanying cartoons, photos, government posters and documents, it was clear that the current controversies about immigration intakes were not new. But in focusing on the elements that united the migrant experience, rather than those that divided it, the opportunity to explore continuities between past and present anxieties about race, immigration and national identity was lost.

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[96] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary 1950s, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

[97] McFadzean, Interview. With the introduction of a new gallery, *Getting In*, in 2003, many of these problems were rectified.

[98] West Corridor, 'The Dictation Test' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

[99] Gallery 2, Segment 7, Context mural decade summary 1990s, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

Journeys

After leaving Gallery 2, visitors passed through the West Corridor which included panels interpreting the Customs House building and its significance in terms of Victoria's economic, maritime and immigration history, including the aforementioned small section on the dictation test. They then stepped into the most striking room of the building, the Long Room. The vast, high-ceilinged space, bordered by arched windows was empty but for a large, seventeen metre-long replica ship in the centre. McFadzean described the Long Room as "a huge public fantastic civic space".[100] In scale and grandeur, it is remarkably similar to the Great Hall at EIIM, a space which curators decided to leave empty save for two huge American flags. Heritage restrictions limiting what curators could do with the Long Room contributed to its similarly empty state, as nothing could be fixed to the walls. However, MV hired an external design firm, Cunning and Martin Design, and together they came up with the concept of the ship recreation. The migrant journeys represented inside the ship aimed to fulfil what the formative evaluation had recommended – to "move or challenge" visitors by "highlighting the human, individual, personal stories", both good and bad.[101] McFadzean says it is "still the most popular exhibit in the museum".[102]

The ship symbolised the greater journey of all immigrants. The first panel read:

> *All immigrants, no matter when they arrived in Victoria, are linked by the common experience of a journey. Over the past two centuries changing forms of transport have meant that this voyage has varied in both duration and degree of comfort. The journey remains one of the most memorable aspects of any immigration experience.*[103]

This overt use of the journey metaphor harks back to the ABA's Bicentennial exhibition *The Great Australian Journey*, which used it to unite all Australians in an inclusive history that erased conflict and conquest. However, at the IMM the impact of immigration on Indigenous Australians was always acknowledged, albeit in small vignettes. A panel on the exterior of the boat told of the "destructive" impact of early

[100] McFadzean, Interview.
[101] Museum Victoria, "Immigration Museum Formative Evaluation," December 1997, p. 2.
[102] McFadzean, Interview.
[103] Gallery 3, 'The Journey' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

coastal sealers on Indigenous people, including the kidnapping of women and the spread of contagious diseases: "these lawless nomadic seafarers were not settlers, but their exploits encouraged others to follow".[104] However, once inside the ship visitors were redirected to the experiences of immigrants who came to settle. The ship contained three recreated interiors, the first of which was an impression of a steerage cabin of an 1840s square rigger. Visitors were invited to lie on the bunks and listen to the heaving sounds of the pounding swell outside and the more unpleasant sounds of a wooden toilet or 'privy', which had this label:

> *What a smell! Imagine sitting on the bare wooden seat of a privy like this, holding your nose with one hand and the wall with the other, as the ship rolls from side to side.*[105]

In this label and all the others inside the ship, visitors were encouraged to pretend that they were indeed migrants on a life-changing journey. The immersive experience of being within the recreated spaces was enhanced by exhibition text which alluded to the sights, smells, sounds, and feel of the voyage. In the second-class steamer passage saloon recreation of the 1900s, the text read:

> *Tonight will be the highlight of your six-week voyage. The passengers are staging a farewell concert and almost everyone will be performing… As you sink into the padded seat you pause to reflect on the familiar throb of the giant steam engines powering the ship steadily forward*.[106]

The excitement of the steamer was contrasted against the next recreation, a post-war liner of the 1950s. This neat but small berth was the setting for a heart-wrenching trip:

> *They promised that the voyage would be 'the holiday of a lifetime.' It would almost be true if not for the seasickness and cramped cabins… After the long wait to be approved, things have happened so quickly. There hardly seemed time to say proper goodbyes. You believe you made the right decision, but there*

[104] Gallery 3, Segment 3, 'Coastal Sailors' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[105] Gallery 3, Segment 4A, 'Privies and Hygiene' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[106] Gallery 3, Segment 5, 'Second-class Steamer Passage, 1900s' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

is lingering doubt. It still seems too painful to open your photo album and be reminded of loved ones left behind.[107]

A mix of emotions, like that achieved in the first gallery, *Leaving home*, was also evoked here. There was hope, anxiety, fear and sadness. The choice to recreate a post-war liner cabin, rather than a hostel room, gave greater scope to compare and democratise the experiences of post-war migrants with those who came both before and after them. The journey was the leveller of all immigration stories, and the shared emotional experience of all migrants, regardless of gender or class, was the focus.

The evolution of air travel was also given significant attention in *Journeys*. In the interactive 'Journeys Map' the changing trip from Europe to Australia over five generations "from a perilous sea voyage of up to 4 months to a flight lasting barely 24 hours" was tracked visually. Lights on a world map showing the different routes and durations demonstrated these vast changes (see Figure 9).[108] Besides the sailing clippers of the 1850s, the steamships of the 1900s, and ocean liners of the 1950s, all of which had been recreated within the ship, visitors were also introduced to the Constellation Airliner of the 1950s, the Boeing 707 Jetliner of the 1960s and Boeing 747 'Jumbo' Jet of the 1990s. Through the evolution of air travel, passengers were first able to reach Australia from Europe in under a week by 1947.[109] In 1959 Qantas's Boeing 707 jetliner started flying the 'Kangaroo Route', slashing the travel time from London to Sydney to 27 hours.[110] The falling cost of air travel made visits home a possibility for many post-war immigrants. The Journeys Map revealed that these technological changes were also social changes, as they transformed the experience of migration and settlement, and the way that people related to 'home'. Rather than the act of emigration being like a death, as it was for many in the nineteenth century, now more than ever it was possible to return, and in many cases, to change your mind and

[107] Gallery 3, Segment 6, ' Ticket on a Post-War Liner, 1950s' text, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[108] Gallery 3, segment 7, 'The Journeys Map,' Introductory Panel, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[109] Gallery 3, Segment 7D, 'Constellation Airliner, 1950s,' McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[110] Gallery 3, Segment 7E, 'Boeing 707 Jetliner, 1960s,' McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

go back again (as many of the 'ten pound poms' of the 1950s and 1960s did, sometimes returning to live in Australia a second time). The decline of the ocean liners also saw the loss of the tourist element of the journey - the 'trip of a lifetime' through many exotic locations. By comparison the plane flight was brief and offered no chance for side trips, beyond the mid-way stop-over. Air travel allowed curators to gesture at some of these important shifts in the experience of migration. However, the fact that the majority of refugees now also arrive by plane, rather than boat, was not mentioned in the exhibition.[111]

Figure 9: The ship model in Gallery 3 showing the Journeys Map. Photograph from Museum Victoria website, http://museumvictoria.com.au/history/1998.html.

The horror of a refugee's journey by sea was represented, but not through a recreation. On the north wall of the ship were a series of ten drawings by artist Thomas Le. The drawings illustrated the oral history testimony of Mai Ho. Both Le and Ho resettled in Australia after fleeing Vietnam during the late 1970s.[112] Le's drawings traced Ho's ordeal, starting with life in Vietnam during the war and her first foiled attempt escape in 1978. Ho's second attempt involved years of bribing officials and

[111] This history was taken up by curators at the Immigration Museum when re-working Gallery 4 to become *Getting In* in 2003.
[112] Gallery 3, Segment 11, 'Mai Ho' Artist Panel, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

covertly organising to flee on a boat with her two daughters, mother, brother and sister and 160 others. After five traumatic nights at sea, they were rescued by an English oil rig, and transferred to a refugee camp in Malaysia. Le's drawings capture the terror of the journey, but also the monotony of months held in limbo, waiting to be resettled. The panels also showed Ho and her two daughters on the plane to Tullamarine airport in Victoria and their first few months in Maribyrnong Hostel. Ho built a new life with vigour, working in the General Motors Holden factory by day, spending her evenings at night school and also volunteering to help settle other new Vietnamese arrivals. The final panel, 'Success and Home', depicted Ho reading a newspaper announcing her as the new Mayor of Maribyrnong and embracing her daughter, Tan Le, who was named Young Australian of the Year in 1998.[113] Mai Ho's is a genuine success story – one that challenged assumptions about "boat people". Thomas Le's work was both beautiful and shocking, presenting this difficult topic in a sensitive way, which did not alienate visitors. The commission of the artwork by MV was also a way to remedy the lack of 'brought objects' that characterises many refugee journeys.

Two personal spotlights, similar to those in Gallery 2, were placed in showcases in Gallery 3. They told the stories of Leopoldine Mimovich and Olive Tau-Davis, and both drew on themes of cultural survival. Mimovich's journey was a sad one:

> *All she could hear around her in the dark Australian army hut was the sound of women sobbing. Leopoldine lay sleepless, shivering, wondering if they should have waited for the American visas. But Lou had been anxious, and they accepted the first visas that arrived.*[114]

Lou and Leopoldine migrated from Austria after the Second World War, and spent their first weeks in Bonegilla Migrant Hostel near Wodonga in north-east Victoria. Her story allowed the curators to reveal the often fraught process of migration and settlement, which was not always well-managed by Australian authorities. Images of

[113] The artworks and a summary of Mai's oral history interview are available on the Museum Victoria website, http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/themes/3512/mai-ho-vietnamese-migrant-story?start=1. Copies of the drawings were displayed in the exhibition, and Thomas Le donated the originals to Museum Victoria in 1999.

[114] Gallery 3, segment 9, 'Leopoldine Mimovich', Storyline and Context Panel, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.

the riots which broke out at Bonegilla in 1952 and 1961 were included in the display. Leopoldine's illustrative wood carvings were her link to home, and the source of her livelihood. An image of her with her husband and daughter in her workshop in Kew from 1973 showed her eventual success, although the display emphasised the "painful period of transition" often experienced by newly arrived migrants.[115] Her story was contrasted with that of Olive Tau-Davis, who as a young journalist in Port Moresby, had "never intended to marry a white man, or even marry at all", yet married Mark, an Anglo-Australian, in 1976 and moved to Victoria the following year. The display explored the connections that Olive's children still have to Hanuabada, her village in Port Moresby, which they visit every two years.[116]

The theme of maintaining cultural traditions and links with the homeland was drawn out through these stories, yet the display also emphasised the diversity within groups, stating "no cultural group is homogenous – interests can differ markedly within as well as between cultures".[117] Again the curators were careful to avoid the appearance of a 'multicultural' display. Rather than 'ethnic' artefacts representing a group, these stories were individual and personal, and all objects were strongly associated within their owners.

The other elements of the Gallery 3 were the two interactive stations where visitors could sit and browse the 'Settlings' program, which contained factual and statistical information of migration to Victoria and Australia. Like in previous migration exhibitions these databases proved popular and needed constant additions to satisfy visitor demands.[118] In 2003 they were replaced with a new program called "Origins", which allowed visitors to explore Victoria's immigrant communities in greater depth. All entries were also bilingual – in English, and the language of the country of origin.[119] The program was important and popular because it broadened the representation of

[115] Ibid.
[116] Segment 10, 'Olive Tau-Davis', Storyline and Context Panel, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Museums Board of Victoria, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, p. 19 notes that there will be "development of census and historical data on additional communities for the popular Settlings interactive." See http://museumvictoria.com.au/about/corporate-information/annual-reports/.
[119] McFadzean, Interview.

migrant groups in the Museum, which was otherwise limited by exhibition space and available objects. As McFadzean said, "it was another way of answering that issue about 'you haven't got a Dutch story'... if you go to Origins at least you know they're all there."[120]

One project from the original programs brief meant for Gallery 3 had to be vastly minimised. Called 'Living Luggage', it was curated by Gary Poore, a marine biologist and Curator of Crustaceans at MV. The original description was:

> This exhibition looks at the plants and animals that have come from other countries – legally, illegally or accidentally – and that are now in some cases essential components and in others pests, in the Australian environment.[121]

Storylines were to include the farming of sheep in Australia, the importance of quarantine and customs, the honey bee and changing Australian diet. However, due to space restrictions the only elements of 'Living Luggage' that eventuated are five vignette-style porthole showcases along the south wall of the ship recreation. Visitors who peer into these are surprised and charmed by the mini-scenes they contain – cheeky rats playing cards below deck in one; the loathed cockroach hitching a ride with his many relations in another; and pretty songbirds caged in luxury in the next. These humorous glimpses at the unseen migrants below deck suggest a much broader story of environmental change brought about by human migration – one that unfortunately could not be told in its entirety at the Immigration Museum. As McFadzean observed, "ultimately, of course, it was a museum about people and cultural diversity".[122] The natural sciences were better placed to exhibit their history in the new Melbourne Museum. However, in a sense this separation served to perpetuate the association of migration with cultural diversity, and thus, ironically, multiculturalism.

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Museum Victoria, "Immigration Museum and Hellenic Archaeological Museum, Exhibition Consultant Brief & Contract, Version 2," Section 4, Part 2, p. 1.
[122] McFadzean, Interview.

Impacts

Impacts was the most problematic of the opening galleries, and only lasted in its original form for four years before being replaced in 2003 by the successful *Getting In*. While much has been written about its replacement, the original gallery has not been addressed in any depth.[123] Essentially, *Impacts* was about the contributions of migrants to Victoria. MV commissioned an essay "in celebration of Australia's rich cultural diversity" by author Arnold Zable, who had collaborated with Anna Malgorzewicz on the 1995 exhibition *Bridging Two Worlds*. The essay, called "Celebration", appeared on the walls of the gallery. It began poetically:

> *Ours is a nation of immigrants and indigenous peoples. A new world with an ancient past. A grand symphony with many melodies*. [124]

Zable wrote of his Polish mother, who found refuge in Melbourne after the Second World War, singing Irish folk tunes as she cooked and sewed in their house in North Carlton; of the Italian neighbours he played cricket with during his childhood; and of the "rich abundance" and "achievements of our immigrant forebears" which we now enjoy. It was celebratory - as that was of course its purpose and nature; but for some it was perhaps overly sentimental. The reflective, positive nature of the gallery was intended as the "completion of the journey through the first floor Immigration Museum exhibitions", to function as "the continuation of the personal and collective journey, welcoming the visitor back to Victoria with a fresh point of view".[125]

Within the walls inscribed with Zable's words was a stunning "swirling Cornucopia" of treasures – objects illustrating success stories of immigrants and Indigenous people

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[123] See Moya McFadzean, "From Dictation Test to Detention Centres: Exhibiting Controversy, Past and Present," paper presented to the Museums Australia National Conference 2002, Adelaide, 21 March 2002, http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/30569/20030625-0000/www.museumsaustralia.org.au/conf02/index.htm. Katherine Goodnow includes a section on *Getting In* in *Museums, the Media and Refugees*, pp. 42-44. Ian McShane wrote a review of the gallery in 2006. See Ian McShane and Linda Young, "Exhibitions" [two separate exhibition reviews], *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 37, no. 128, 2006, 123-124.

[124] Gallery 4, Arnold Zable essay, McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder. There is a copy of the essay on the Museum Victoria website: http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/infosheets/celebration-an-essay-by-arnold-zable/.

[125] Cunningham Martyn Design, "Developed Design Report For proposed Immigration Museum," 31 March 1998, 'Gallery 4: Impacts, Overview of Gallery.'

whose industry, traditions and cultural pride had made modern-day Victoria.[126] They included a piano from the Henty family, the first British migrants to settle in Victoria; clothing designed by West African immigrant Naji Imam; the story of Dame Nellie Melba's father David Mitchell, a Scottish immigrant who became one of the most important architects of "Marvellous Melbourne"; and the famous Bostito family business – Eucalyptus Oil.[127] Indigenous stories of maintaining and changing cultural practices, of nourishment from traditional foods and adaptations to a new white society in which they had limited power were told through photos on the walls.[128] The principal message of all these stories was "to show that immigration has affected every facet of our everyday lives, and that this is an ongoing and living process".[129] However, it seems that when these objects were combined in the single large case, surrounded by celebratory texts, the message was lost.

Meighen Katz, then a student at Monash University in the Masters of Public History program, interviewed the curators of the gallery in 2004. She concluded that the problem was one of authorship, or a mismatch between the message of the exhibition and its design:

> The curators struggled to make themselves heard within the institution and thus their voice was difficult to recognise on the exhibition floor. The end result was a 'cacophony' of stimuli that most audiences fled.[130]

Linda Young's review of the opening galleries in *Museum National* also remarked on the design, describing it as "cutting edge, but... complex and confusing". She also faulted the exhibition for its predictable focus on food.[131] The mix of objects was supposed to challenge the visitor, as the Developed Design Report shows:

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[126] Ibid, 'Gallery 4: Impacts, Visitor Experience – Interpretive Techniques.'
[127] Gallery 4, 'Cornucopia Case', McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[128] Gallery 4, Segment 2A, 'Maintaining Traditions' and 'Changing Traditions', Segment 2B, 'Adapting Traditions', Segment 3A, 'Nourishing Traditions' and 3B, 'Between Traditions,' McFadzean et al, "Immigration Museum: Complete Set of Final Text," binder.
[129] Cunningham Martyn Design, "Developed Design Report For proposed Immigration Museum," 'Gallery 4: Impacts, Overview of Gallery.'
[130] Meighen S. Katz, "History under construction: curators and the experience of creating accessible public history," MA Thesis, Monash University, 2005, p. 55.
[131] Linda Young, "Immigration Museum" (exhibition review), February 1999, *Museum National*, p. 31.

> The visitor encounters a range of familiar material in an unfamiliar context, which encourages broader connections to be made between immigration and its role in the shaping of everyday life. For example, a familiar Australian icon such as Fosters Lager will be shown to have a particular immigration story linked to a Belgian bacteriologist. The design of the gallery provides a frame for exploring and celebrating our cultural diversity.[132]

Perhaps it was this overt agenda of celebration, compounded by the overwhelming design, that turned audiences off. The stories of immigration in Galleries 2 and 3 were all carefully situated in their historical contexts, and told using the voice of the migrant through objects, maps, timelines and recreations. Gallery 1 compared objects from different periods united by their similarities. In contrast, the fanciful and fantastical *Impacts* gallery was an abstract aberration. *Impacts* suffered a similar fate to earlier thematic exhibitions such as *Survival* at the NMA in 1988 and the ABA's exhibition *The Great Australian Journey* – too abstract overall, without a meaningful and necessary historical 'lesson' or 'story' to tell.[133] McFadzean agreed that the over-abundance of visual imagery had a part to play in the exhibition's failure to engage audiences. She also noted that feedback from visitors revealed that "people wanted more about contemporary stories, people wanted more about policy, they wanted more of the nuts and bolts, and curatorially we knew that".[134] At a time when immigration, multiculturalism and refugees featured frequently in political and social debates, people wanted a museum that set out the "facts". While historians and curators know that objective facts are a thing of fancy, presenting a clear version of past events substantiated by tactile and relevant items of material culture remains an important function of these public institutions.

Access Gallery

Impacts also functioned as a link to the nearby *Access Gallery*, which housed short-term exhibitions focusing on different Victorian communities.[135] It was the first community gallery in a major Australian museum to have its own dedicated manager.

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[132] Cunningham Martyn Design, "Developed Design Report For proposed Immigration Museum," 'Gallery 4: Visitor Experience – Interpretive Techniques.'

[133] On the power of narrative in museum exhibitions see Julie Marcus, "Erotics and the Museum of Sydney," in *A dark smudge upon the sand: Essays on race, guilt and the national consciousness*, Canada Bay, NSW: LHR Press, 1999, pp. 37-52.

[134] McFadzean, Interview.

[135] The name changed to 'Community Gallery' in 2005.

Maria Tence started in this role in 1997. Her approach to working with each community was influenced by visiting community spaces and galleries all over Australia, where she felt a rigorous academic framework and a commitment to historical principles of verifiability and thorough documentation were largely lacking. To counter these problems, Tence worked intensively with each community group, filtering their ideas into a form that would make a professional-standard exhibition:

> I have to get them to understand that the process is not just about validating them, the process is about making an interesting exhibition for visitors and to telling their stories more broadly. Because if it was just about them we could do their story in a community hall, it doesn't have to be in a mainstream organisation.[136]

At one stage Viv Szekeres, whom Tence describes as a "mentor", critiqued the IMM's *Access Gallery* on the grounds that it didn't have a personality of its own, and instead resembled the rest of the museum. However, as Tence points out, this was their aim:

> We went for that because we didn't want poorer communities, under-resourced communities to be any different from the richer more established, stronger, well organised communities, we wanted them to be seen as having an equal contribution. In order for [visitors] to engage once they've been through a beautiful exhibition space that has been professionally curated, then they get to a community gallery, the last thing I want them to do is to stop at the door because it's not of the same quality, as the rest of the museum, which often happened with the Migration Museum.[137]

The result was consistent with the aims of the museum overall – all inclusive and distanced from the negative associations of multiculturalism (such as haphazard community exhibitions with displays of traditional costumes and relics). This approach was only possible with the agreement of the executive board, which Tence secured with the support of Malgorzewicz. With adequate financial resources and a corporate-focused model, in which community exhibitions were promoted in the same way as curated exhibitions, the *Community Gallery* at the Immigration Museum was unlike community galleries elsewhere.

[136] Tence, Interview.
[137] Ibid.

Conclusion: Personal stories versus 'gritty' histories

When the IMM opened in November 1998, the press coverage was jubilant. The *Sunday Herald Sun* had an advantage as, through Alan Howe, it was able to take credit for the museum's existence:

> The Sunday Herald Sun takes special pride in the new museum, which rivals New York's Ellis Island for the emotion it generates. This newspaper played a part in its establishment, initially taking the concept to the State Government and then generating public interest in a project that cost $19 million, which came painlessly from the Community Support Fund. Premier Jeff Kennett has been an emphatic supporter and has been personally involved in much of the project. The result is the best public building in Melbourne.[138]

The ongoing comparisons to the Museum's American predecessor prompt the question, was the IMM really 'Australia's Ellis Island'? And did the exhibition team achieve their aim of creating a museum about the immigration experience and process, rather than immigrants?

It is difficult to determine whether the IMM appealed to a broader audience than the MMSA in 1986. In the first full financial year of operations, over 75,000 people visited the museum, which was beyond expectations.[139] For a small and new museum, this was a huge achievement. Museum Victoria's other campus, Scienceworks, which had been open since 1992, attracted 345,000 visitors in the same year. However, the visitor numbers for the MMSA in its first full financial year (1987-1988) were more than twice that of the Immigration Museum, at 170,000.[140] So perhaps the audience was more mixed in terms of 'Anglo' and 'ethnic' visitors, but overall, at least initially, it was smaller.[141]

Interest in the Museum's Tribute Garden, where people could pay a fee to have their name or the name of an ancestor engraved on a panel, gives some indication of who

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[138] "Depository Of Dreams," *Sunday Herald Sun*, 8 November 1998, p. 42.
[139] Museums Board of Victoria, *Annual Report 1999/2000*, p. 14.
[140] Szekeres, "The problem of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage," p. 73.
[141] Visitor numbers to the Immigration Museum rose the following year to 85,000 (*Annual Report 2000/2001* p. 28) and have continued to grow. In 2010-2011 the museum attracted 128,350 visitors (*Annual Report 2010/2011* p. 4).

was interested in the Museum. The "community memorial", as Kennett called it, mimicked the 'American Immigrant Wall of Honor' at Ellis Island, which had been an important part of that Museum's public fundraising project in the later 1980s.[142] Kennett launched the Tribute Garden in January 1998, with an initial release of 5000 available spaces for individual names (his would be one).[143] To the joy of museum staff, these spaces were filled by a surprising number of fourth and fifth generation Australians. Malgorzewicz told reporters:

> We were heartened, because we are developing a museum that is going to be relevant to everyone. It's not a chronological museum and it's not a museum about particular communities, it's a museum about the experience of migration. So whatever your particular ethnic background, you can relate to an element within the museum.[144]

In this snippet and in all the press coverage of the Museum's opening, staff enthusiastically told prospective visitors not what the museum was, but what it *was not*. But what sort of history did these visitors encounter upon visiting the museum? Was it vastly different from what they would find at the MMSA in Adelaide, a supposedly "multicultural migration museum", or in any of the previous major exhibitions about immigration in other Australian museums?

On the whole, the answer is no. The IMM's thematic galleries covered much of the same ground as its predecessors. The motivations for migrants to leave their homelands, the varying experiences of the journey, and the myriad difficulties of settling in a new land and maintaining cultural traditions were all part of the museum's galleries. As we have seen, the historical context for these journeys was a weak point, as it was only the timeline in Gallery 2 that explicitly addressed changing immigration policies with relation to race. The history told was also narrower than in previous exhibitions – for instance, there were no in-depth explorations of the impact of immigration on place, such as the exhibition on Carlton at the Museum of Victoria in 1995, or the spotlights on La Perouse, Ultimo and Marrickville in the PHM's 1988

[142] For a discussion of the popularity of this fundraising project and the way it perpetuated a particular type of immigration story, see Erica Rand, *The Ellis Island Snowglobe*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 159-171.
[143] Belinda Parsons, "Migrants To Sign Up For Tribute," *Age*, 23 January 1998, p. 6.
[144] Deborah Stone, "A moving experience," *Age* (Living section), 13 October 1998, p. 17.

exhibition *Australian Communities*, or the MMSA's exploration of Elizabeth in 1986. Divisive issues like racial discrimination, policies of assimilation and the shift to multiculturalism were referred to in personal stories rather than explored in their own right. The historical dominance of British immigration and its effect on Australian culture and institutions was also unexplored, unlike at the PHM and MMSA, which both had displays on Empire, or at the NMA's 1995 exhibition *Tolerance* with its section called "British to the bootstraps?". Mandatory detention of refugees, which was a comparatively recent policy change when the Museum opened, was absent from the displays.

These limitations were exacerbated by the adoption of personal stories as the main interpretive mechanism throughout the galleries. While audiences responded positively to all the exhibits (with the exception of *Impacts)*, some museum professionals felt the harder issues were being side-stepped in favour of a politically-neutral feel-good display. For instance, Linda Young called for museums to "offer more comparison and analysis of experience", rather than relying so heavily on individual, disconnected narratives.[145] At the Museums Australia Conference in 2002, McFadzean explained the adoption of the personal stories method, and agreed that it had obscured other issues:

> ... while fulfilling our aim to be inclusive of individual voices, and distilling the broader immigration narrative down to personal stories, I think we lost the opportunity to be more courageous and tackle some of the vast complexities of an immigration history… For example, we did not deconstruct broader narratives through looking at such issues as the interactions between communities and how these interactions have evolved the society we have today; or more directly grapple with the gritty political and economic landscapes.[146]

In an effort to avoid the group-based ethnic identities of multiculturalism, it was the individual, not their identity within a community or place, which dominated the representation of migration history in the permanent galleries of the Immigration

[145] Young, "Immigration Museum," 31.
[146] McFadzean, "From Dictation Test to Detention Centre," p. 2.

Museum in 1998.[147] In an unsettling way, this appeared to parallel the changes to multiculturalism instigated by the Howard Government, and the shift to a language of citizenship and social cohesion.

Linda Young's reading of the IMM as "a victory of style over substance by political correctness clothed in hypercool design" may be rather harsh, but nevertheless raised the somewhat-superficial nature of the galleries.[148] But Young failed to take into account the complex circumstances in which they were created. Rather than attempting to support the federal government's ideological program, curators seized an opportunity to present immigration history in a new light, by telling personal stories through themes that found commonalities in human experience. They chose to disassociate immigration history from now-pejorative connotations of multiculturalism, and in doing so tried to make the IMM relevant to all Victorians. For Kennett, the new museum certainly performed its task of championing the results of Australia's immigration programs, and showcasing Victoria to the world as a place of diversity and pride. The emphasis on the success and inclusivity of the migration story at the Immigration Museum, (to the detriment of more complex, difficult and divisive histories), can best be seen as a response to a shift in public views of multiculturalism in the late 1990s.

In 2010 Malgorzewicz reflected that she was always troubled by the notion of the "dominant culture" and the "other" – "which was migration, which was ethnicity, which was cultural diversity". Early on in her time at the MMSA in Adelaide she told her colleague Viv Szekeres:

> Wouldn't it be wonderful if one day, the Migration Museum need no longer exist, it had fulfilled its purpose because everyone appreciated and respected the stories that we were endeavouring to convey, the history that we had to say, and that everyone accepted that it was just as important as other dimensions of our history.[149]

[147] The *Access Gallery* was of course the exception.
[148] Young, "Immigration Museum," 31.
[149] Malgorzewicz, Interview.

But just over a decade later, she found herself at the helm of a new migration museum, one that was desperately trying to appeal to the mainstream. While it was successful in engaging a broader range of people in their own family histories, the IMM was not able to transcend its peripheral status, or become 'Australia's Ellis Island'. Part of the reason was simply that it was not a national museum – it was a Victorian one, and the story was necessarily partial. But there was also some public confusion over the remit and purpose of the museum. In 2009 McFadzean revealed that museum staff "still get feedback that people still don't understand why we're called an immigration museum and they still don't understand what that means".[150] The option of changing the Museum's name was canvassed, but in an age of corporate branding, there was too much at stake. Besides, the alternatives sound ludicrous – a 'Cultural Diversity Museum' perhaps?

Here we come to the irony that persists in migration institutions everywhere, and will no doubt continue. These institutions first arose out of the need to include the histories and cultural heritage of visible, recent migrant communities into the dominant and accepted homogenous national historical narrative. The Immigration Museum found support in 1996 as a result of resistance to this new model, and had the difficult task of both assuaging concerns and defending the success of a diverse population. Its overt reintegration of dominant cultures or ethnicities into the immigration narrative spoke to those 'Anglo' Australians who wanted their own cultures recognised and celebrated in the same way that multiculturalism had championed 'ethnic' cultural traditions. However, despite the inclusion of 'everyone', their individual stories remained separate from the mainstream, exhibited not in the Melbourne Museum, but in yet another museum of migration.[151]

Although the political circumstances and motivations behind Australia's two migration museums were vastly different, they shared the same limitation. Recasting the national story into a continuous narrative of arrivals, settlings, and impacts, in the hopes that immigration history would somehow be understood as important, inclusive,

[150] McFadzean, Interview.
[151] Wills, "Finding Room for Loss," 77.

and above all else, relevant to all Australians, was the project of both the MMSA and the IMM. By distancing themselves from the 'ethnic' or 'multicultural' label, the IMM was able to democratise the story and appeal to some sections of the mainstream. But in doing so, they repressed the complexities of Australia's migration history. In a nation where race had long defined both the mainstream and national identity, the silences of the Immigration Museum's stories spoke louder than words. Museum exhibitions about migration history in Adelaide and Sydney in the same year tackled the multicultural backlash in very different ways.

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Migration history and the Olympic Arts Festival

When Tan Thanh Lu arrived off the coast of Darwin in 1977 he was overcome with joy. With three other men, aided by buoys, he swam two kilometres to shore. They reported their arrival from Vietnam and swam back to their families and a boat named 'Tu Do' – Freedom.

Mr Lu's voyage carried him into one of history's great migrations, joining more than six million people who have migrated to Australia.[1]

In Darling Harbour in 1998, in the heart of the Olympic city, the Australian National Maritime Museum proudly told the story of immigration to Australia from 1788 until the present in the exhibition *Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788-1998*. In the opening panel of the exhibition, the part of the protagonist was played not by a convict, a pioneer settler or a European post-war migrant, but by Tan Thanh Lu, a refugee who arrived by boat just two decades earlier. His joyous arrival in 1977 cast him in "one of history's great migrations" – an epic narrative that was inspired by the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York. But here it was used for distinctively Australian purposes.

In the build up to the highly anticipated Sydney 2000 Olympics, the cultural diversity of Australia was promoted by the Olympics Organising Committee (SOCOG) as a unique and attractive feature, alongside the wonders of the natural environment and the ancient traditions of the nation's Indigenous peoples. In the period between 1997 and 2000, four Olympic Arts Festivals designed to "leave a legacy of greater awareness and appreciation of Australian culture" included hundreds of events such as art exhibitions,

[1] 'Introductory panel/theme label', ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," Draft 4, 4 March 1998, File 2099.0580/3, Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers: Exhibition Design.

plays, dance productions and musical performances.[2] The theme of the second festival, 'A Sea Change', was "transformations in Australian culture", which comprised a number of responses to contemporary debates about immigration policy and multiculturalism.[3]

This chapter compares and contrasts two of these responses – the ANMM's *Tears, Fears and Cheers* exhibition, and the MMSA's travelling exhibition *A Twist of Fate, an experience of war, pain, torture and survival: the stories of refugees who have settled in Australia.* Both were endorsed as official events in the 'Sea Change' festival, and both aimed to challenge people's perceptions about migrants and refugees. But this is where the similarities end. The ANMM sought to "make the ethnics mainstream, and the mainstream ethnic", effectively democratising the 'nation of immigrants' story in a similar way to the Immigration Museum in Melbourne.[4] By contrast, the MMSA aimed to shake up the successful immigrant story of modern Australia and to confront the fear and suspicion surrounding refugee arrivals. Read together, these two exhibitions reveal the competing tensions underlying the successful 'nation of immigrants' story in Australia at the end of the twentieth century.

Sydney's Immigration Museum?

Plans to establish a migration museum in Sydney in time for the 2000 Olympic Games had been under consideration since 1993.[5] A feasibility study commissioned by the NSW Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, Michael Photios, argued that such a museum was necessary as:

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[2] These were The Festival of the Dreaming in 1997, A Sea Change in 1998, Reaching the World in 1999 and Harbour of Life in 2000. "A sea change: Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festivals: 98 Official Program," Special Supplement, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1998, no day or month, p. 2.

[3] The creative director of the 'A Sea Change' Festival was the arts journalist Andrea Stretton, who had previously worked for SBS and ABC, and also acted as a consultant for Keating's 1994 Creative Nation policy. Sheila Brown, "Tributes flow for the 'guardian angel,'' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 November 2007.

[4] This phrase was used by the exhibition's co-ordinator, Kevin Jones, and was quoted by the Museum's Director, Kevin Fewster, in "Tears, fears and cheers," p. 41.

[5] The NSW Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, Michael Photios, announced on 7 September 1993 that $300,000 had been set aside in the State Budget for a feasibility study into a Museum of Immigration. Kinhill Group, "Interim Feasibility Study into the Establishment of a Museum of Immigration, report to the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs and the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW," p. 3.

> There is no museum in NSW that has achieved the community liaison, intellectual focus, or public profile on issues concerning migration and cultural diversity similar to that achieved by the Migration Museum in Adelaide.[6]

Indeed, in the feasibility report it is the Migration Museum, and not America's Ellis Island, that provided the model for a Museum of Immigration in NSW. The proposal had the support of the major ethnic communities represented by the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, as well as the NSW Branch of Museums Australia and the Sydney Jewish Museum. However, a submission from the Powerhouse Museum to the Minister argued that a Museum of Immigration was unnecessary. It pointed out that the PHM already had collections and curators specialised in the areas of migration history and cultural diversity. The Museum also had history of community outreach programs with ethnic groups stretching back to 1988.[7] A Migration and Settlement Histories Resources Centre was proposed as an alternative, to be located within the PHM, and to act as a focus for further research and community engagement projects. A program of exhibitions and instillations at "sites with particular relevance to migration history", to be curated by Powerhouse staff, would complement the centre.[8]

The idea for a flexible centre or unit, rather than an expensive new building, was one that appealed to the State government. Such a centre would still be able to cater to the needs of those from "minority cultures", whom the feasibility report acknowledged were "asking for a way to share their experiences, to reverse processes of the loss or denial of culture".[9] NSW Premier Bob Carr established the Migration Heritage Centre (MHC), but rather than positioning the centre within an existing museum, as the PHM suggested, he created it within his own department. The MHC would "research and promote the contribution made by immigrants to the State and nation's life", and was initially limited to a website and research partnership grants program.[10] The MHC eventually moved to the PHM in 2003, and developed into an

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[6] Ibid, p. 21.
[7] Ibid, p. 10.
[8] Ibid. The State Library was also opposed to the idea of a migration museum, and instead suggested more work be done to encourage existing institutions to "take on board the implications of multiculturalism for their own policy and practice." (p. 12).
[9] Ibid, p. 6.
[10] NSW Ministry for the Arts, "New Body to Showcase Migrant Heritage," *Arts Bulletin*, August 1998, quoted in Petersen,"Though This Be Madness," 35.

important virtual museum specialising in community and regional partnerships.[11] But in the late 1990s, the absence of a physical migration museum in Australia's largest city left a gap in the State's museum scene, especially during the 'Sea Change' festival of 1998.

'A Sea Change', migration and the ANMM

With the exception of the PHM's *Australian Communities* exhibition, the only Sydney museum with a permanent exhibition of migration history was the ANMM. Its *Passengers* gallery, dating from 1991, focused on the experience of migration by sea, and as we have seen, it included an important section on Vietnamese boat arrivals. The opportunity to capitalise on the Museum's existing collections and research in migration history was seized by curators in a proposal for a new exhibition for the 1998 Olympic Arts Festival. The first brief for this new exhibition was called "Coming to Australia: Ships Which Shaped the Population".[12] However, the final product had less of a maritime focus, and was more akin to the overtly national 'peopling' narrative of America's EIIM. While Ellis Island influenced the profound desire for an immigration museum in Melbourne, it had a more overt stylistic and interpretive influence on the ANMM's work in the late 1990s.

ANMM Director Kevin Fewster was the main proponent of the Ellis Island model. He had visited the museum in New York, and was particularly struck by the use of statistics and demographics in the main first floor exhibition, *The Peopling of America*.[13] In this display American immigration history was presented through a variety of three dimensional charts and graphs. Blue and pink profiles of 'boy' and 'girl' shapes showed the rising proportion of female to male immigrant arrivals between 1860 and 1984; brightly coloured columns of different heights represented the various places of origin of immigrants from 1820, dividing them into the Americas, Asia, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Central Europe, North-western Europe and Africa.

[11] Petersen, Ibid.
[12] Kevin Jones, "Exhibition Brief 'Coming to Australia: ships which shaped the population," 14 November 1996, incorporating ideas from discussions on 11 and 15 October with Jeannie Douglas, Kevin Fewster, Mariea Fisher, Kieran Hosty, James Jupp, Quentin Mitchell, Mike Stammers, Helen Trepa and Mary-Louise Williams, File 2009.0580/2, Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers: Exhibition Design, ANMM.
[13] Kevin Jones, Interviewed by Eureka Henrich, 18 September 2009, Adelaide, Australia.

Spread around the large floor space were other features such as a word tree, showing the origins of various Americanisms such as the Chinese-derived "gung-ho", and an American flag which morphed into a mosaic of faces.[14] At the early stages of exhibition brainstorming for their 'Sea Change' exhibition, the ANMM contacted political scientist and ANU academic James Jupp, who had a strongly statistical perspective on the history of Australian immigration.[15] His expertise contributed to the 'Faces of Australia' part of *Tears, Fears and Cheers (TFC)*, which, as the exhibition brief demonstrates, relied heavily on the design and interpretation of migration history at EIIM:

> *Faces of Australia* will use interactives to present demographic and cultural information in an engaging and accessible form. Interactives will be a combination of simple mechanical devices and possibly data bases such [as] passenger lists or convict lists. Interactives from Ellis Island Museum will be used as models for the exhibition.[16]

At this early stage the exhibition's message was simply that "most Australians are immigrants and descendants of immigrants", invoking the importance of family history and ancestry that had bolstered the success of EIIM. The exhibition design was to communicate this idea in a "serious and positive" manner.[17] However, the other important influence on the interpretation and presentation of migration history throughout *TFC* were the insights into public sentiment gained through formative audience evaluation undertaken by the Museum. As a result, the exhibition reflects popular attitudes to immigrants at the time of the evaluations in May 1997.

As we have seen, the Australian political scene during the first term the Howard Government was marred by the divisive and vitriolic views of Pauline Hanson. Following her election to Federal parliament as an independent in 1996, Hanson formed a new political party, One Nation, in April the following year. In the Queensland State election of June 1998, this party, which Jakubowicz describes as "the party of white Australia, opposed to Asian immigration, or indeed any immigration" won a massive 22 percent of the vote.[18] Hanson had captured the concerns of a largely

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[14] *The Peopling of America*, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, personal visit 15 January 2009.
[15] Jones, Interview.
[16] Jones, "Exhibition Brief 'Coming to Australia: ships which shaped the population'," p. 3.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Jakubowicz, "White Noise: Australia's Struggle with Multiculturalism," p. 111.

rural, white population, those who felt they had been 'left behind' by the sweeping economic and cultural changes of the Hawke/Keating years and who looked back to simpler (albeit mythical) times. While Hanson's views were not as appealing in the NSW electorates, the regular media coverage certainly raised the hackles of those who identified with and had benefitted from the multicultural policies of the previous twenty years. Indeed, during the height of Hansonism, "scarcely a day went past without her appearance in the media".[19] The politics of race was front page news across Australia.

These issues surfaced in evaluations conducted for *TFC*. By the mid-1990s it was common practice for museums to carry out front-end and formative evaluation to test subjects or material for display on prospective audiences. The *TFC* exhibition team decided to target families, school groups, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds as their desired audience groups, as the museum had a reputation, like most maritime museums, as a primarily male and 'Anglo' place of interest. Noting that "family visits to museums are usually initiated by mothers", the museum recruited only women with children for the study.[20] Curators sat in a separate room and watched on video as four focus groups of mothers, 36 women in total with a range of ethnic backgrounds, ages, and working/non-working lifestyles, were presented with different images of material proposed for inclusion in the exhibition. Jones remembers that there were two dominant historical perceptions about immigration from the all-female focus groups:

> There was this understanding of this thing called 'post-war immigration', and most people understood that as one part of Australian history, but there was this other thing called eighteenth and nineteenth century immigration and people would regard that as early settlers, and pastoralists and pioneers, and they were different traditions.[21]

A small number of those present also felt negatively towards multiculturalism:

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[19] Ibid, p. 112. See also Paul Sheehan, *Among the Barbarians: The Dividing of Australia*, Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia, 1998, pp. 151-174.
[20] Kevin Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers: Migration to Australia, 1788-1998," paper presented to the Museums Australia Conference, Albury, May 1999, p. 2: http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/61.
[21] Jones, Interview.

> …multiculturalism was not a popular concept and discussion of Aboriginal history brings up a fear that people will be shown something political, which is not their idea of a good weekend or something which will bring them into the Museum.[22]

Based on these responses, the exhibition team decided to convey the message that immigration has been a constant feature of Australian history, indeed, that Australian history has been a history *of* immigration. Immigrants weren't just people who had arrived after the Second World War – settlers and pioneers were immigrants too. The aim of this repositioning was to make "the ethnics mainstream and the mainstream ethnic", thus providing "recent immigrants a place in a continuing history" and making "British Australians part of the same story".[23] Like at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, the aim was to disrupt the idea that immigration is about "them", and instead to cast immigration history as a story about all of "us". Curators also decided to avoid any references to current politicians, as Jones explains:

> ...we could see in the press how One Nation had killed the debate. There are reasonable arguments about immigration which could not be revealed by the mainstream media because they were caught up in One Nation hysteria. If we made immigration party political, it would simply turn visitors off. They would not listen.[24]

Instead, the personal experiences of individuals were used as vehicles to explore difficult issues. While not directly addressing Hansonist views in the exhibition, the Museum did adopt an advertising campaign that ran with the tagline: "Migration – Get the Facts".[25] This appeal to objective facts and reason rather than political rhetoric and media hype positioned the museum as a trustworthy, authoritative and non-political source for information about immigration.

The decision to exhibit a history of immigration to Australia as a positive and unifying narrative was of course a political one, regardless of the "soft sell" approach adopted as a result of the formative evaluations. Like Kennett's mission to convey the positive

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[22] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 3.
[23] Ibid, p. 9.
[24] Ibid, p. 8.
[25] "Museum's not at sea," *Australian*, 26 November 1998, newspaper clipping, no page, File E02.0305\2, Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers, ANMM.

effects of Victoria's cultural diversity, the ANMM was countering negative and divisive views in the media about immigrants, 'Australians', and who belonged. Interestingly, most of the women in the focus groups thought that an exhibition of immigration history would not be about them. If they came from the post-1945 group, they believed the exhibition would be about pre-war migration, and vice versa. Jones noted that this perceived division of arrivals "carried concepts of legitimacy – ideas about who had the greatest claim to being a true Australian".[26] It was these very issues of legitimacy that were at the time being openly questioned by Hanson and her One Nation party. So the *TFC* team planned the second half of the exhibition, 'Ships that Shaped Australia', as a series of five recreations, with identical conceptual designs. By presenting each period of Australian immigration history in the same way, they hoped to convey the message that all were of equal worth and legitimacy.[27]

Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia, 1788-1998

For a temporary exhibition that was only on display for six months, *TFC* was a huge undertaking. Comprising five historic recreations of ship interiors and migrant accommodation, as well as artworks, artefacts, interactives, videos and soundscapes, it rivalled many of the permanent galleries in other history museums in floor-space and budget.[28] By comparison, plans to include similar recreations in the NMA's migration exhibition, *Horizons*, (which was being developed concurrently), had to be scrapped due to a lack of space. A sizable sponsorship of $60 000 for *TFC* as part of SOCOG's arts festival enabled the ANMM to invest considerable time and research into the exhibition.

Visitors entered the first part of the exhibition, 'Profiles of Australia', by descending a ramp. While walking down the ramp they passed a series of units showing "where we came from" at five points in Australia's history - 1788, 1861, 1901, 1947 and 1996. Census figures represented on pie charts showed the changing patterns in countries-

[26] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 3.
[27] Jones, Interview.
[28] The exhibition was displayed in the Mazda Gallery, and the North and South Galleries, with a total exhibition space of 650 square meters.

of-origin, and Aboriginal populations were estimated before their inclusion in the census. In the next section, an interactive called "Australians speak" showed the many languages spoken by citizens. By selecting a language, visitors could see the places where that language was spoken light up on a map of the country. They would also hear the word "welcome" spoken in their chosen language. A three-dimensional timeline, divided into two time periods, pre- and post-Federation, showed the changing relationship between migration levels and the natural increases in population. Here the idea was to place Australia's fluctuating immigration levels within a historical framework where they could be linked to key historical and political events, both domestically and internationally.[29] All these elements were adopted from displays at EIIM.

Another feature curators planned to adapt was the word tree (see Figure 10). The first exhibition brief suggested an "ethnic tree… showing the origin of common words such as Eureka or bungalow".[30] However, as Kevin Jones recalls, it was difficult to find enough words that had been added to Australian English from immigrants. So instead, the histories of individual words were explored in an interactive station called "What did you call me?" (see Figure 11). By sliding the hands away from the faces, visitors could uncover the origins of terms used to denote difference such as "pom" and "reffo", as well as definitions of words used in the exhibition such as "ethnocentric", "racist" and "refugee".[31]

[29] ANMM, "Profiles of Australia: A travelling exhibition from the Australian National Maritime Exhibition" (application to Visions of Australia, includes colour photographs), File 2009.0580/6 Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers.
[30] Jones, "Exhibition Brief 'Coming to Australia: ships which shaped the population'," p. 4.
[31] The terms defined in 'What did you call me?' were Aborigine, Australia, Australian, Colonial, Currency, Dago, Digger, Ethnocentric, Gabaa, Jimmy, New Australian, New Chum, New Hollander, Pom, Racist, Reffo, Refugee, Skip, Waitoman, Wog and Immigrant. ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," Draft 4, 4 March 1998, File 2099.0580/3, Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers: Exhibition Design.

Figure 10 (left): Word tree at Ellis Island Immigration Museum, photograph Eureka Henrich 2009.

Figure 11(right): 'What did you call me?' from *TFC*, photograph ANMM. Also visible is the Nissen hut recreation in the background, showing the classroom section.

Ideas from EIIM were thus adopted and modified for an Australian context and audience. Rather than the three-dimensional graphs built on the floor, like at Ellis Island, the demographic statistics were represented on large upright panels. 'Profiles of Australia' was designed in this way so that the panels could be dismantled and transported. Although an application to the Commonwealth Government touring program, Visions of Australia, was successful, the national tour never eventuated. Jones recalls that the guidelines for Visions of Australia changed, and with a new focus on original material and objects from the Distributed National Collection, 'Profiles of Australia' no longer fit the bill.[32]

While all the interactives were based on those in the *Peopling of America* gallery at EIIM, they also had precedents in the history of Australian migration exhibitions. One example was the "visitors' ancestry interactive", which looked like a three-dimensional bar graph made up of twenty-nine transparent tubes. The panel read:

[32] Jones, Interview.

> *Where does your family come from?*
> *Migration to Australia is part of the family history of 98% of Australians. Place your disc in a cylinder to include your family's heritage in our chart of Australia's origins*.[33]

The aim of this interactive was to suggest that most Australians have immigrant ancestry. Curators included the countries where more than 50,000 Australians were born as well as each continent, and also "Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders", but did not include "Australia" as an option, forcing non-Indigenous Australians to choose a country relating to their family history.[34] It proved popular, especially among school groups who tried to help their particular group 'win' by adding extra discs – at various stages, Italians, Maltese, and British were all in the lead. [35] A similar but less overt interactive was a feature of the MMSA opening galleries in 1986, where visitors were asked to mark their "place of origin" on a map of the world. However, that earlier model was more about an individual's physical journey rather than their family history or ancestry. First generation migrants could mark the country they were born in, and second, third, fourth and fifth generation visitors, as well as Indigenous Australians, could identify their place of origin as Australia if they so wished. The message of the exhibitions of the late 1990s at the ANMM and also at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne was a much more explicit insistence of a 'nation of immigrants' narrative.

Many tensions underlay this story. Some visitors asked why ancestry was only defined in terms of country – what about Jewish Australians, for instance? One person thought it important to separate white South Africans from their black counterparts.[36] These complexities and variable ways of identifying could not be encapsulated by the Ellis-style exhibits, and instead emerged through some of the personal stories in the second half of the exhibition.

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[33] 'Where does your family come from?' Story label, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.
[34] The options were as follows: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, New Zealand, Other Pacific, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Other Asia, Lebanon, Turkey, Other Middle East, North America, Central and South America, Britain, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Other European and Soviet Union and Africa.
[35] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 4.
[36] Ibid, p. 6.

The other tension was the place of Indigenous Australians in this national narrative of immigration. Jones remembers that there was curatorial debate about how to address the topic – or indeed whether to address it at all.[37] One option was to track how Aboriginal people came to be in Australia, the other was to show their responses to immigration. The final display took the form of a commissioned artwork from the La Perouse artist Laddie Timbery and his family. The painting was done on a fibreglass rock wall, and was placed opposite a video of immigrants' first impressions of Australia. It showed the artists' views of "how they came to be in Australia and how they feel about the history of immigration". The "impact" narrative that ran through the galleries of the IMM was more pervasive than this solution, but both struggled with the appearance of tokenism in an attempt to be inclusive. Jones acknowledged this problem, saying that "our exhibition had begun life as a story of immigration and we needed to expand it or it would tell the stories of only 98 per cent of Australians".[38] Because the first half of the exhibition addressed the shape of the Australian population, there were opportunities to include Indigenous populations in the graphs and charts. But the overall concept of ships and arrival left little room for Indigenous history in the bulk of the exhibition.

To encourage the idea that continuity of migration has been a feature of "mainstream Australian history", and that each period of migration has the same legitimacy, the 'Ships that Shaped Australia' part of the exhibition was deliberately structured in an equalising fashion.[39] Each theme - Convicts, Gold, Settlers, Post-war and Vietnam - included an artwork, a ship model, and a built structure. Rather than have an exhibition of "precious" objects from the nineteenth century and "vernacular" ones from the twentieth century, the idea of artwork as a marker of high and therefore 'valuable' culture was adopted. Jones himself went on a tour of UK museums to secure loans, including eighteenth century watercolours of early Sydney by the anonymous Port Jackson Painter from the Natural History Museum in London. He remembers the attempt at parity over two centuries:

[37] Jones, Interview.
[38] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 7.
[39] Ibid, p. 5.

> We felt that the nineteenth century history would more happily fit in an art gallery and be understood in that kind of dignity, and that post-war immigration wouldn't. It was a newer story and so we wanted to make them appear as one continuing history and have the same modes of interpretation through the whole thing.[40]

There are of course numerous 'vernacular' objects from the nineteenth century, many of which were not preserved and cared for as artefacts of historical significance. The display of these objects next to similar ones from the twentieth century may have been a more historically accurate way to level the playing field. However, the curators were concerned that immigration history should be displayed as an important history, and an effective way to communicate that *gravitas* to a broad audience was through art.[41]

The exhibition of forced migrations can suffer from a lack of objects. To counter this problem, Helen Trepa, another ANMM curator, travelled to Vietnam with Tan Lu, the captain and builder of the refugee boat *Tu Do*, where they acquired objects for the exhibition. *Tu Do* was bought by the ANMM in 1990 and was restored in consultation with the Lu family, who arrived on it in Darwin in November 1977. In Vietnam, Trepa and Lu scoured second hand stores to secure items similar to those carried on the original journey, and returned with bedding, crockery, toys, life jackets, food and clothing which were used to furnish the *Tu Do* recreation in *TFC*.[42]

TFC was the first time that a museum had constructed multiple replicas and recreations from each period of immigration history. In other Australian migration history exhibitions, a single room or vessel had been recreated, for instance the migrant hostels at the MMSA in Adelaide and in the *Australian Communities* gallery at the PHM. The seventeen metre-long ship in the Long Room at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, which was still under construction at the time *TFC* opened, did

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[40] Jones, Interview.

[41] For the post war period, artworks by immigrant artist Yosl Bergner and Australian ex-pat Colin Colahan were lent by the Australian War Memorial. For the Vietnamese section two works by artist Vi Phat were displayed, called 'How can you ignore' and 'Home from the Void', ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.

[42] ANMM, "Tears, fears and cheers: Migration to Australia 1788-1998" , *SIGNALS, the quarterly newsletter of the Australian National Maritime Museum*, no. 42, March-May 1998, 6.

include recreated living areas from a number of different historical periods and social classes – from the 1840s, to the 1900s and the 1950s. But in *TFC,* each period was represented in a separate area and located in its own historical and political context. A coffin-shaped portable convict solitary confinement box represented the first phase of convict migration; reconstructed bunks from an emigrant ship represented the 'Gold' period; a first class saloon from the ship *SS Great Britain* displayed the comparative opulence of steam travel from the 1850s – 1870s; a reconstructed classroom and bedroom from an immigrant hostel of the 1950s portrayed the experiences of millions of post-war migrants; and a reconstructed deck and cabin of *Tu Do* demonstrated the plight of Australia's "latest wave of immigrants to come by sea".[43] All recreations were designed to be fully interactive for visitors, and especially for children.

Helen Trepa discussed the issues involved in the hostel recreation in an article for *Public History Review*.[44] Although Australia established many migrant hostels from the 1940s to the 1980s, Pennington Migrant Hostel is one of the best documented, with collections existing at the NMA and the MMSA. This was the reason it was chosen for *TFC*. However, unlike at the MMSA, Trepa decided that it was necessary to represent two rooms, as "it was thought that recreating only one room would limit the interpretation of the site, its history, and the countless stories of those who lived there".[45] A school kindergarten and a bedroom/living area were selected as the spaces for theatrical recreation. Trepa had visited the MMSA in Adelaide, and noticed that although their migrant hostel recreation used original furniture, visitors were unsure whether they could touch the items. Her critique of this first hostel recreation was: "though the room is an authentic reproduction, it fails to engage the visitor. It is frozen in time and space becoming the single dominant image for those who pass through."[46] However, as we have seen, the exhibit was hugely popular, largely because it was the first time that these experiences had been explored in an Australian museum.

[43] ANMM, "Coming to Australia: An exhibition about our migrant heritage at the Australian National Maritime Museum, April to October 1998', A Sponsorship Opportunity for P&O," c1997, File 2009.0580/2, Temporary exhibitions: Tears Fears and Cheers: Exhibition Design.
[44] Helen Trepa, "The Real Thing?: Pennington Hostel Recreation at the National Maritime Museum," *Public History Review*, vol. 6, 1997, 164-175.
[45] Ibid, 168.
[46] Ibid, 170.

Nevertheless, Trepa was keen to improve on the original. By avoiding authentic objects and instead adopting a theatrical reproduction approach, she hoped to engage visitors in the rooms and to present not just one migrant hostel experience, but many.

To achieve this aim, everything in the display was custom built, allowing visitors to pull out drawers, sit on the bed, and pick up objects. A small number of real artefacts were on display in cases surrounding the exhibit. To communicate the changing nature of Pennington, a slide show of images told the hostel's history, from the building of the huts in 1947 to their destruction in 1984.[47] A flipbook, placed on a seat in the bedroom, contained interior and exterior photographs of over 200 other migrant hostels and camps that existed throughout Australia. A second flipbook contained issues of the *New Australian*, a magazine published by the Department of Immigration to help new migrants assimilate to the "Australian Way of Life". Many other objects and stories were on display in interactive drawers, games and sound recordings. Children could play the "suitcase game", deciding which possessions to pack for the journey.[48] Adults could test their knowledge in a trivial pursuit-style game based on Australian immigration history, including answering the question "Which immigration minister said 'Two Wongs don't make a White'?"[49] These interpretive techniques ensured that there were many ways to interact with the rooms, and they reflected some of the huge diversity of experience in the history of migrant hostels. It is a shame that this innovative recreation was closed, along with the exhibition, after only six months. By contrast, the migrant hostel bedroom at the MMSA remained on display for fifteen years.

The use of suitcases as a design feature housing video screens was used in *TFC* in a similar fashion to the NMA's 1995 exhibition *Tolerance*. This area was called 'Issues',

[47] Ibid, 173.
[48] 'Pick and pack' Label, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.
[49] Trepa, "The Real Thing?," 174. This oft-quoted remark was made by Arthur Calwell in Parliament in 1947. It appears more 'racist' out of context – 'Wong' and 'White' are references to specific people, and the joke was a political jibe at the Member for Balaclava, Thomas White.

and screened three short films made by the broadcaster SBS for the exhibition.[50] Here curators hoped that personal viewpoints could broach the tricky topics that had become politicised in the media. In the film "Migration: A Never-ending Debate", members of the radical anti-immigration group National Action were shown holding placards with the words "stop the Asian invasion". These were contrasted with other placards held by unidentified protestors stating "Racism sucks". One woman of Indian descent told the cameraman "my niece still tells people her brother's name is Peter for fear of being stigmatised". An ecologist from the Australian Museum stated that in Australia there are "too many people, causing too many impacts on our life support systems". However, the most shocking footage came from a seemingly fun film called "Playing Together", shot at Pennington Primary School and narrated by a bubbly teenage host. She asked the students what the differences were between Australia and the countries they came from. One child described her experience in Serbia – "in the middle of school, the bombs come". A Somalian child said "Mum took me and my sister but they killed my Dad and they killed my brother. After that I wasn't hungry". One Yugoslavian girl described her old school: "if you do something, anything wrong, they get a big stick and they just put it on your hand, just hitting". These statements, told matter-of-factly by young children in their school playground, were more effective in explaining the reasons for Australia's humanitarian migration intake than any politician's polemic.

In another film, called "A mixed reception", a Greek-Australian man compared his experiences to newer migrants:

> Now they're getting upset because all these Vietnamese and Asians coming into the country. We went through that phase ourselves – the first Greeks, the first Yugoslavs, the first Maltese. People didn't like us communicating in our own language, they wanted us to arrive in the morning and in the afternoon you were supposed to know English. And now we are going through exactly the

[50] Two other films were shown in the migrant hostel bedroom recreation, as it was felt they related better to that environment. Tape 2, "Barbara Williamson," Tape 3, "Playing Together," Tape 4, "A mixed reception," and Tape 5, "Migration: A Never-ending debate," courtesy Kevin Jones. Tape 1, "First Impressions," was unavailable.

> same phase with people saying that those people nearby shouldn't be allowed into the country.[51]

These personal memories of cultural pressure to assimilate are a common experience of new migrants. A similar technique was used in *The Peopling of America* at Ellis Island, with oral history-style videos of migrants remembering their arrival in America, and talking about the difficulties and prejudice they have experienced since.[52] In *TFC* the generational shift between 'new' migrants and those now accepted was also drawn out by the inclusion of contemporary artworks. Curators chose to display a famous photograph by David Moore, "Migrants Arriving in Sydney, 1966", next to an adaptation of the original by Chinese-Australian artist Hou Leong. The captions read:

> *David Moore took this photograph in the 1960s when Southern Europeans suffered racism in Australia. It is sympathetic to the immigrants. By the 1990s his photograph had become a well known view of post-war migration.*
>
> *Hou Leong inserted his own face in David Moore's photographs Migrants arriving in Sydney in 1995. By then Europeans had been accepted into Australian society and Leong wanted to claim the same status for Asian immigrants*.[53]

Asian migrants had been at the heart of anxieties about immigration and national identity since the late nineteenth century, and these fears were dredged up in the backlash against multiculturalism of the late twentieth century. Pauline Hanson's 1996 claim that "we are being swamped by Asians" had reignited the debates of ten years earlier, when the then opposition leader John Howard had suggested that the rate of Asian migration be "slowed down a little" to support social cohesion.[54] Given this history, the inclusion of Leong's artwork made an important point. As Catriona Elder put it in her analysis of Leong's artworks, "there are still some citizens who seem *more* Australian than others – or, to put it the other way around, there are Australians who are represented as *less* Australian than others."[55]

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[51] Ibid.
[52] *The Peopling of America*, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, personal visit 15 January 2009.
[53] 'Migrants arriving in Sydney' and 'An Australian (after Migrants arriving in Sydney' Labels, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3. Both images are in the ANMM Collection.
[54] John Howard speaking on ABC Radio's 'PM' program, 1 August 1988, quoted in Peter Mares, *Borderline: Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001, p. 152.
[55] Elder, *Being Australian*, p. 138.

Racism is a fundamental part of Australia's immigration history, and while this certainly was not avoided, it assumed a peripheral role in the narrative of *TFC*. The stories of Chinese miners and the arrival tax placed on them during the goldrushes of the 1850s, the deportation of South Sea Islanders by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, and the racism suffered by post-war migrants were all portrayed through the timelines, video segments and recreations. Yet, in the interests of a family audience who wanted a good day out, they were not dominant. As Jones stated "the overall tone of the historical narrative was positive... our view was that we needed to woo the audience with a positive message".[56]

The end point of Australia's assisted immigration program by sea was in 1977, when the *SS Australis* arrived with 650 passengers from England. At the end of the exhibition, two airplane seats referenced the other mode of travel, and the text stated "Immigrants and refugees first travelled by air in 1960".[57] Visitors could sit on these seats while completing the current immigration points test. The exhibition text reminded visitors that "It is hard to get in. Try this immigration points test. Could you successfully migrate to Australia?"[58] The historical narrative of the exhibition ended on this contemporary note, softly questioning everyone's claim to being 'Australian'.

Positive multiculturalism

Tears, Fears and Cheers was well received, winning both the Government and Grand National Awards at the Ethnic Affairs Commission Multicultural Marketing Awards for 1998. The commission's chairman, Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian, said that it won because of the "broad community consultation, a very effective marketing campaign, and [it] reflected a sophisticated understanding of Australia's diverse population".[59] Success could also be measured by summative audience research, which indicated that the museum achieved its aim of attracting more women (60% of 100 visitors surveyed) and

[56] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 9.
[57] 'The last migrant ship' Story label, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.
[58] 'Today' Story label, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.
[59] Anon, "Museum's not at sea," *Australian*, 26 November 1998, newspaper clipping, File E02.0305\2, ANMM.

those from non-English speaking backgrounds (20% of those surveyed). Most interestingly, Kevin Jones reported that "most visitors believed the exhibition had a message, and they interpreted it to be either promotion of multiculturalism, focus on the suffering of migrants, or to illustrate the changing trends in Australia's population".[60] Suffering was a theme in the stories of many post-war migrants who had less than positive experiences of the migrant hostels, and of course the passengers of *Tu Do*. Yet both had positive, cheerful endings. There were few stories in *TFC* that ended in return migration, permanent cultural dislocation or depression – the other side of the 'successful migrant' narrative. So it is interesting that the message of suffering was commented on in the summative audience research. And while the appearance of "multiculturalism" was avoided at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, the positive response to *TFC* along with the perception that it actively promoted multiculturalism suggests that visitors welcomed the redemptive tone of the exhibition. In a climate where immigrants were portrayed as the harbingers of social disorder, this well structured story of struggle, triumph and nation building must have been reassuring for those who saw it.

As is always the case with exhibitions about migration, there was dissatisfaction from those who felt they were not represented. The feedback forms for the exhibition include many of these remarks, for example "there was no mention of the hundreds of British child migrants sent to orphanages in Australia" and "not enough on European migration. Nothing on Croatia. Keep trying."[61] However there *was* mention of these particular groups, such as the Dreadnought scheme that sent British child migrants to Australia, or the strong representation of European migrants in the migrant hostel recreation, but visitors keen to see their experiences reflected in the exhibition may have regarded these snippets as piecemeal or superficial. One way that they could contribute their own personal stories or family histories was through the museum's

[60] Jones, "Producing Tears, Fears and Cheers," p. 10.
[61] ANMM, Multiple "Please let us know what you think" visitor feedback forms, File E02.0305\2 Tears Fears and Cheers Exhibition – Temporary. There was mention of British child migrants in the exhibition, and the various schemes set up between Britain and Australia such as the Dreadnought scheme, eg. Subtheme 2: Children's Odyssey, ANMM, "Tears, Fears and Cheers, final theme, story and object labels," File 2099.0580/3.

Welcome Wall – a memorial to all immigrants modelled on a similar wall at EIIM.

Accepting the 'nation of migrants'

The only lasting legacy of the *TFC* exhibition, the Welcome Wall, was an attempt to capture the imagination of the Australian public in the same way as Ellis Island's 'American Immigrant Wall of Honor'. Fewster said it was also partly inspired by the many approaches he had received over the years from ageing migrants whose ships first arrived at the wharves in Darling Harbour adjacent to the Museum.[62] The power of the site for these people was personal and potent, but, as a national museum, the Welcome Wall was designed to be inclusive of all Australians, not just those who arrived in Sydney. Fewster launched the project in November 1997, prior to *TFC*, and the first bronze panels of names were unveiled in January 1999. Within a year there were 2000 names registered on the wall, 60% of which were from NESB countries of origin, and 60% were post-war migrants. Conversely, 40% were others – either descendants of earlier migrants, or the families of more recent ones.[63] The important ideological work carried out by the Welcome Wall project was to erase the perceived difference between all these arrivals, in the same way that *TFC* had done. However without the historical context and "facts", the message of the Wall was similar to that of the ABA's exhibition *The Great Australian Journey*, exemplifying Davison's "myth of the Great Voyage."[64]

Names were listed on the wall in the order they were registered, rather than by date of first arrival. The only particulars included on the wall were the individual or family's name, just like at Ellis Island. Requests for special treatment from descendants of those who arrived on the First Fleet, or other groups who wanted their nationality acknowledged on the panels, were denied in order to preserve the ethos of the project. As Fewster reiterated:

[62] Fewster, "Tears, fears and cheers," 43.
[63] Ibid, 44.
[64] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, p. 56.

> By treating all migrants, regardless of ethnic origin or date of arrival, as equal we hope the Welcome Wall can help us all realise and accept that Australia is a nation of migrants.[65]

Unlike the Immigration Museum's Tribute Garden, the Welcome Wall was designed as an ongoing project. Unveiling ceremonies are still conducted twice a year, and often attract crowds of thousands. Many of these families also contribute to the Museum's database of migrant stories, where they can enter details on their country of origin, birth and death dates, occupation, method of arrival, name of vessel (if relevant), place of arrival, and place of settlement. There is also a field where the person can enter a short comment about their family's migration story.[66] The wall is still the only national monument to migrants in Australia, and now has over 24,000 names.[67]

Uncomfortable histories: *A Twist of Fate*

In the late 1990s at the MMSA in Adelaide, director Viv Szekeres sensed an alarming shift in attitudes towards migrants and refugees. The appearance of Pauline Hanson on the national political scene in 1996 was "a real worry", as was the Howard Government's privatisation of immigration detention centres in 1997. Complaints that mandatory detention breached international human rights and that conditions in Australia's detention centres were unacceptable prompted a report from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which was released in May 1998.[68] Szekeres remembers that everyone at the MMSA was "horrified" at what was going on in the detention centres, and when their visitor comment boards began to show racist comments, she felt a response was needed:

> It was then that I decided that we would put on an exhibition about refugees and we would show the visitor as graphically as possible that anyone, anywhere can become a refugee, it's only a twist of fate...[69]

The exhibition was called *A Twist of Fate, an experience of war, pain, torture and*

[65] Ibid, 45.
[66] See the Welcome Wall page on the ANMM website: http://welcomewall.anmm.gov.au/.
[67] Steve Meacham, "Museum Sets A Course For The Future," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2011.
[68] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Those who've come across the seas: detention of unauthorised arrivals,* Sydney: HREOC, 1998.
[69] Szekeres, Interview.

survival: the stories of refugees who have settled in Australia. The MMSA certainly did not undertake any formative audience research to test reactions to the exhibition's themes – Szekeres says they "aimed at making visitors feel very uncomfortable indeed about what happens when you lose your human rights".[70] Like *TFC*, *A Twist of Fate* was endorsed as a part of the 1998 Olympic Arts Festival, 'A Sea Change', but was not directly sponsored by SOCOG. The exhibition received funding from Visions of Australia, and after its initial display at the MMSA between February and November 1998, it toured nationally from December 1998 until August 2001.[71]

In her 2008 book *Museums, the Media and Refugees*, Katherine Goodnow uses *A Twist of Fate* as an example of a "standard narrative" of migration history that has been "added to".[72] Using this framework, *A Twist of Fate* is standard because it exhibits a narrative of departure, journey and arrival, but with a "grittier edge to the story".[73] In fact, there was little that was standard about this exhibition. When Szekeres decided to create an exhibition that would show the visitor that anyone could become a refugee, she did just that – by designing an immersive experience, like a nightmare ride on a ghost train. The exhibition had more in common with a film set or theme park than a museum display. Szekeres wrote scripts to describe each of the three refugee escape paths, which were then constructed from scratch by museum staff. The scripts read like instructions for a play – structured in scenes, they describe the lighting, objects and sounds to be used in each room. An excerpt from the Polish story gives an idea of how the space looked:

> Scene 1
> Inside the hallway of a Polish home. Warm colours, prints or painted china on the walls. Warm light. Christmas decorations indicate the time of the year – December/January. A recent family photograph on the wall taken in summer dated August 1939. Two figures in SS uniform stand either side of the door with rifles pointed into the hallway directly towards the visitor.[74]

[70] Ibid.
[71] Migration Museum, *A Twist of fate, an experience of war, pain, torture and survival: refugees in Australia*, (exhibition booklet), Adelaide: Migration Museum, 1998.
[72] Goodnow's definition of standard narratives and metaphors is adopted from Ian McShane's 2001 paper, *Challenging and Conventional*, which was discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 15-16.
[73] Goodnow, *Museums, the Media and Refugees*, p. 35.
[74] Draft 2 of script, 'A Twist of Fate European story', MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7/8/9.

Like a film, the stories represented in this part of the exhibition were fictional. Each physical environment was based on historical research, but it was gathered from secondary sources rather than the usual method of using personal oral history interviews. Szekeres didn't want to interview anyone who had been a refugee, because it was "too harrowing".[75] So not only was *A Twist of Fate* entirely devoid of objects from the Museum's collection, it told refugee stories that were not based on real people. This is certainly not a standard approach, and I have not found any other exhibitions elsewhere that are similar. Recreations of ship interiors and migrant hostels had been used to engage visitors in previous migration exhibitions. But Szekeres took this one step further, completely reworking the relationship between the visitor and the museum exhibition by literally placing the visitor *in* the story.

Visitors could choose between three paths – "Journey 1, Escape from Viet Nam"; "Journey 2, Disappearance in Latin America"; or "Journey 3, War on the Eastern Front" - and were instructed to take a coloured key card, which would open the doors on their journey.[76] A series of separate rooms took the visitor from a refugee's home, to their escape, and finally to the refugee camp where they awaited resettlement. These rooms were devoid of curatorial text, and it was only at the end of the journey that the visitor discovered what the fate of their fictional character was, and how people like them came to Australia. The text at the end of Journey 3 read:

> *Your journey followed a Polish family separated by the Second World War, which began after Hitler's armies invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Like thousands of others this family is arrested without warning. The teacher and his son are sent as political prisoners to Dachau Concentration Camp. His wife and daughter are sent to work as slave labourers in German factories and farms. At the end of the war in 1945 much of Europe lies in ruins. Millions of people are on the move. Two million are stateless. Many of them fear to return to countries which are under Soviet domination. Known as Displaced Persons, over 170, 000 come to Australia as refugees[77].*

The choice of stories is important. Curators adhered to the 1951 United Nations

[75] Szekeres, Interview.
[76] MMSA, 35mm colour slides, 'Twist of Fate' binder, 1998.
[77] Ibid.

definition of a refugee, and did not attempt to stretch the concept of forced migration back to earlier arrivals, such as convicts, or even to Indigenous people removed from their lands. The three stories were broadly representative of the post-war period between the late 1940s and early 1980s, and the South American story was a notable inclusion, as these arrivals were very recent and had not received the same amount of attention in museums as the more well-known (and numerically dominant) Vietnamese refugees.[78] A large banner at the start of the exhibition fervently stated the contemporary relevancy of these stories:

> *IMAGINE*
> *War*
> *Brutal dictatorship*
> *Enslavement*
> *Imprisonment without trial*
> *Your land confiscated*
> *Forced into the army*
> *Your children taken away*
> *Persecuted for your religion*
> *Tortured for your beliefs*
> *THIS IS HAPPENING NOW*
> *TO THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE*
> *AROUND THE WORLD*[79]

This orientation section of the exhibition also included the recreation of a bomb site, symbolising the destructive impact of war on civilian populations. Images of war zones from the UN Refugee Agency were screened on a projector, interspersed with facts and figures about the history of refugees and current statistics.[80] Museum staff anticipated that the exhibits may be too confronting for some visitors, and included signs to warn people about what they may encounter:

> *Warning*
> *This section contains images and stories which may distress you.*

[78] Although South Americans began to arrive as refugees before the Vietnamese (the first came from Chile following the overthrow of the Allende Government in 1973), their numbers remained comparatively small. Australia has resettled 16,000 people from Central and South America since 1973. By comparison, more than 155,000 Vietnamese people have been resettled since 1975. Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Refugee and humanitarian issues: Australia's response*, Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009, Chapter 2, p. 25.
[79] Text on large banner, Gallery 9, section 1, MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7/8/9.
[80] Goodnow, *Museums, the Media and Refugees*, p. 35.

Not for children under 12 years old.
Not advisable for those who have experienced torture or trauma.
Not for people who find small spaces difficult.

If you do not want to enter Block H refugee camp, follow the lights along the ramp into the next gallery.[81]

The purposefully confronting and traumatic refugee journeys were balanced by a final section, called 'Sanctuary'. The eight refugees who were involved in this display reached agreement with the Museum that they wouldn't talk about their traumatic refugee experiences. Instead, they told their stories of settlement and their new lives as South Australians. This provided a positive endpoint to a difficult and dark exhibition. The decision to include this extra section was arrived at by a reference group organised by the MMSA to oversee the exhibition's development. It comprised people who had experience working with refugees, including educators, mental health practitioners and people who worked with new arrivals.[82] Although this group thought the recreations of the three refugee stories were fantastic, they recommended that something else be added, as "you can't leave the visitor there".[83]

So what impact did this highly unusual exhibition have? Did it change public perceptions of refugees, as the curators hoped it would? On one hand Szekeres was satisfied that the exhibition had an emotional force beyond that of most others. One man she came across in the exhibition, who had fought in the Vietnam War, was moved to tears by the Vietnamese story. Szekeres also reports school group visits where Vietnamese children spoke up about their parents' refugee experiences.[84] It certainly had a profound impact on those who saw it, especially people who had a personal connection to the stories. But on the whole, the exhibition failed to attract visitors. Szekeres was disappointed that there was not more coverage of the exhibition in the press, and cites the timing of the exhibition as one reason:

> Had we waited and done [the exhibition] in 2002 or 3 it would have got huge media coverage – it got virtually none. It travelled, and people who saw it

[81] Sign for Entrance to Gallery 8, 'Escape from Hell Block H', MMSA Internal Working File Gallery 7/8/9.
[82] Goodnow, p. 36; Szekeres, Interview.
[83] Szekeres, Interview.
[84] Ibid.

> thought it was terrific, but it didn't influence the people I had hoped it would influence at all, and it was very disappointing in that respect, it influenced people who already were of like minds.[85]

What the MMSA curators could not have known when they were developing the exhibition was that international events in the Middle East would prompt a huge increase in refugee arrivals by boat, reigniting debate on Australia's border protection policies and straining the already flawed immigration detention network. Refugees began arriving in boats crewed by Indonesian fisherman at Ashmore Reef in the Timor Sea from 1995, but numbers were small. In four years, only 118 people arrived this way.[86] However, between 1999 and 2001, approximately 9500 people arrived by boat seeking asylum.[87] The business of smuggling hundreds of people on dangerous boats was lucrative, and the demand for passage by desperate people encouraged the racket. Sections of the media reported each new boat arrival as a potential breach of Australia's northern borders, and, as Ruth Balint has written, politicians added fuel to the fire:

> By the turn of the twenty-first century, invasion anxiety had reached fever pitch, fuelled by the crude rhetoric of politicians who claimed, among other things, that these numbers – actually tiny in comparison with most of the rest of the world - constituted a national emergency.[88]

By the time *A Twist of Fate* finished its national tour in August 2001, a new crisis was looming. On August 26, a Norwegian container ship, the MV *Tampa,* responded to a message from the Australian maritime safety authorities and went to the aid of a wooden boat sinking in the Indian Ocean. The *Palapa* was carrying about 430 asylum seekers bound for Australia, most of them Afghans.[89] Once aboard the *Tampa*, the asylum seekers threatened to throw themselves overboard if returned to Indonesia, so

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Ruth Balint, *Troubled Waters: borders, boundaries and possession in the Timor Sea*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005, p. 125.

[87] Janet Phillips and Harriet Spinks, "Immigration Detention in Australia," *Australian Parliamentary Library Research Papers*, 23 January 2012, http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/Detention#_Toc313892836.

[88] Balint, *Troubled Waters*, p. 126.

[89] Ibid. See also Robert Manne, "26 August – 11 September 2001, From Tampa to 9/11: Seventeen days that changed Australia," in Crotty and Roberts, Turning Points in Australian History, p. 239; Brett, *Australian liberals and the moral middle class*, pp. 208-209.

the Captain headed for the nearest Australian territory, Christmas Island. The Howard Government used the incident as a way to demonstrate its tough stance on border protection, and forbade the ship to enter Australian waters. In the days that followed, the tragic and desperate voyage of the *Tampa* played out in the Australian and international news media, culminating in the creation of Howard's 'Pacific Solution', and later, the children overboard affair.[90] These events have been written about extensively elsewhere.[91] What is clear is that the Howard Government's reaction to the incident solidified its chances at the federal election held on the 10th of November 2001. The government's support for the American 'War on Terror', following the shocking 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington by Islamic terrorists, was also endorsed by a majority of Australians. As Balint observed, "Howard rode to electoral victory largely on the back of dramas unfolding offshore".[92]

A Twist of Fate opened at a time when the mandatory detention of asylum seekers was a concern of some Australians, but before the ill-fated occupants of the *Palapa* hit the international headlines and became political footballs in domestic Australian politics. Had it opened afterwards, there would have been far more media attention. Perhaps a more effective marketing strategy would have helped. Or a bigger budget. But there is another reason for its low attendance and profile. The exhibition was not uplifting. It was not pleasant or entertaining, and didn't conform to any standard comforting 'nation of immigrants' narrative. Even the Vietnamese *Tu Do* story in *TFC* was more inspiring. There the curators highlighted the moment of arrival at Darwin, the relief of sanctuary and dry land. Australia was the saviour, and the new arrivals became grateful and proud citizens. The narrative equalised all immigrants and their descendants, and claimed that they are all part of the same story. But *A Twist of Fate* revealed that for refugees, it is a very different story. Sometimes it's a story they cannot bear to tell. So the MMSA told it for them.

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[90] For discussion of this see Conclusion, pp. 309.
[91] For example see David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003.
[92] Balint, *Troubled Waters*, p. 130.

Conclusion: 'Us' and 'them', a tale of two exhibitions

Museums that told stories of immigration trod a difficult line in the late 1990s, trying to change attitudes whilst increasing their audience base. *A Twist of Fate* was deliberately designed to make visitors feel uncomfortable. It aimed to change attitudes towards refugees - to encourage people to empathise with their plights rather than to view them with hostility or indifference. It was an exhibition about "them", directed at people who identified as "us". However, the "us" were not motivated to visit. Szekeres wrote in 2002 that the exhibition was attacked by some quarters as "too politically correct", a symptom of a political climate in which "any analysis that is critical, or that raises problems from the past, is suspect."[93] *TFC* had a wider appeal because curators at the ANMM anticipated these types of reactions. Their priority was to speak to a large audience, and the compromise was to pitch the displays in such a way that families with children could enjoy a day out at the museum and encounter history that was informative, perhaps even challenging, but certainly not disturbing. Jones hoped the exhibition would start a conversation about contemporary Australian multiculturalism, not stifle it.

By contrast, *A Twist of Fate* was so confronting that it risked eliciting feelings of denial and guilt and which may have deterred audiences. Although the exhibition text requested that visitors take the imaginative leap into the shoes of a refugee fleeing their homeland, for many this was too much to ask. It provoked a defensive attitude instead. A comment in the visitor book of a Forum Gallery display around the same time illustrates this well. It was written by a woman who had visited a display mounted by the Tatar Bashkurts, a very small refugee community formed in Australia in the 1980s following religious persecution in the USSR. The woman wrote "As the English in Australia are now an abused and oppressed minority, should they be represented here?"[94] The English, as the largest group in Australia, were of course represented in the MMSA's exhibitions, and had been since 1986. But they were not part of this small display on the Tatar Bashkurts, nor were they part of *A Twist of Fate*. As Szekeres observed, "reality is not the issue here but, rather, perceptions or misconceptions that

[93] Szekeres, "Representing diversity and challenging racism: the Migration Museum," p. 128.
[94] Unidentified visitor, quoted in Szekeres, Ibid, p. 150.

the museum must deal with."[95]

In order to attract more visitors and encourage tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity, the ANMM, like the Immigration Museum, placed a greater emphasis on what makes us the same, rather than what makes us different. By democratizing the 'nation of immigrants' story, they responded to all those Australians who felt neglected by the multicultural emphasis on ethnic communities, those Australians who wanted their migrant ancestors' histories acknowledged in a positive way. During the lead up to the Sydney Olympics, Australia presented itself to the world as "possibly the most multicultural and tolerant society on earth".[96] The 'nation of immigrants' was narrative perfectly suited these purposes. But in order to make this history inclusive, it first had to be de-politicized. And as we have seen, it was a compromise that only some curators were willing to make.

Meanwhile, at the National Museum of Australia, plans were underway for an exhibition of Australia's immigration history that would include all Australians though their experience of the 'journey'. It was to open after the excitement of the Olympics had abated, in time for the nation's Centenary of Federation. Again, immigration history would be called upon as a proud national narrative. And this time the stakes were high.

[95] Ibid.
[96] Andrew Vincent, "The War against Terrorism and Multiculturalism: Australia's First War of the New Millennium," *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 6, November/December 2001, 8.

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The end of an era:

The National Museum of Australia and the narrative of migration

Another milestone 'birthday'. Another federal committee. Another attempt to define the nation. According to Robert Manne, what characterised Australia's Centenary of Federation in 2001 was that no one could find anything new to say.[1] The frenzy of national introspection leading up to the Bicentenary of 1988, and the patriotic fervour stirred by the Sydney 2000 Olympics, had used up all the oxygen available for rousing statements about what it meant to be Australian. Hopes that the nation might begin its second century as a republic, with a new constitutional preamble, were quashed after the referendum of 6 November, 1999. Rather than looking to the future, it seemed that Australians were clinging to the past.

On the surface, Manne's observation appears an accurate description. The 100th anniversary of Australia's political birth as a nation created neither the controversy of the Bicentenary or the spectacle of the Olympics. Politicians found it hard to inspire admiration for Australian democracy amid so many other national and international events (the Centenary of Federation on January 1, 2001 happened to coincide the dawn of a new millennium, which had been a global, rather than a national moment). However, the Centenary did invite a particular type of national historical reflection – one that reassessed the meaning and significance of Federation in 1901, and took stock of the social, cultural and political changes that had occurred in the hundred years since.[2] Key themes in this reassessment were changes wrought through immigration, and through the Aboriginal rights movement.

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[1] Manne, "The Centenary Celebrations: Sydney" in *The Barren Years*, pp. 147-150.

[2] See, for example, John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of an Australian Commonwealth*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000; Kate Walsh, *The Changing Face of Australia: a century of immigration*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2001; Geoffrey Bolton, *Edmund Barton*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000; Peter Botsman, *The Great Constitutional Swindle: A citizen's view of the Australian Constitution*, Sydney: Pluto Books, 2000; Helen Irving, *The Centenary companion to Australian Federation*, Cambridge and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

As with all types of history making, these reflections took many forms, some critical and searching, others celebratory and predictable. They were written in histories and reports, spoken in public lectures and speeches, and communicated through the display and interpretation of documents, objects and artworks.[3] The Centenary brought 'History' into the national spotlight, and nowhere was this more true that at the National Museum of Australia (NMA). Here, for the first time, Australia's migration history found a permanent home in a national history museum, in the exhibition called *Horizons: the peopling of Australia since 1788*. This chapter tracks the development of this exhibition from the late 1990s through to its unveiling and initial reception in the early 2000s and reveals how it marked both an end and a new beginning for migration exhibitions in Australian museums. I want to suggest that parts of *Horizons* attempted to reposition the concept of "migration" in Australian history and, in the process, deliberately left unresolved the tension at the heart of the 'nation of immigrants' narrative – that the inclusive story is based on a history of exclusion. To contextualise this argument I will first explore the same themes at another level – a public debate about unity and diversity during the nation's Centenary year.

Unity and diversity: a national conversation

Multicultural images symbolising Australia's coming of age as a mature nation (or at least a changed nation) were frequent in accounts of the Centenary of Federation. "Journey of a Nation", the public parade that snaked through Sydney streets to celebrate the occasion, is one example. It drew on the same successful mix of gentle satire and kitsch as the Olympics opening ceremony. The "dancing Hills Hoists, Chinese dragons, local cricket teams, Olympic heroes, posties and a hundred other oddities" led one journalist to admire "what a diverse and unique mob we really are".[4] When Donald Horne kicked off the NSW Centenary of Federation's Barton Lecture series on

[3] Exhibitions that received funding from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation included *Federation, Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, a touring exhibition first exhibited at the National Gallery of Australia, *The Federation Roadshow: a history, a mystery, a bird's eye view*, an exhibition produced by the Migration Museum in Adelaide, the *Federation Gallery* at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra, and the *Federation Festival/Australia Projects*, held at the RMIT Gallery, Melbourne Museum, The Royal Melbourne Zoo and Parliament House of Victoria.

[4] Peter Lalor, "History takes to the streets – Birthday of a Nation," *Daily Telegraph*, 2 January 2001, p. 5.

the theme of "What holds Australians together despite their diversity?", he noted the involvement of a ten year old boy "of Sri Lankan origin" in the Centennial Park evening ceremony on January 1 as an example of how far Australia had come since 1901.[5] Historian John Hirst gave a lecture in the same series, titled "More or less diverse", which opened with the image of a Vietnamese busker in Sydney's Martin Place "playing the didgeridoo".[6] These ethnic disruptions of Anglo Australia and Aboriginal Australia, gladly noted as episodes which set 2001 apart from 1901, were based on the visibility and seeming acceptance of race and ethnicity. But the discussions that both Horne and Hirst pursued in their lectures were about culture. Just what should hold Australians together, despite their diversity, was a bone of contention between these two public intellectuals.

Horne excoriated the monoculturalism of the old Australia. He had seen the worst of it when editing *The Bulletin* in the 1960s – the "Abo jokes", "girlie jokes" and "reffo jokes" attested to the racism, sexism and cultural ignorance of mainstream Aussie society.[7] *The Bulletin* had become "a living museum of decaying attitudes", attitudes that he was keen to challenge.[8] Much had changed since then. But Horne warned that politicians had to find a way to openly discuss the transformations in Australian society and to articulate what values united citizens in the 21st century. He perceived a real danger in popular attitudes towards "special" minorities, which assumed their interests were not valid, and insisted instead that "the mosaic of minority interests that makes up any modern society is the essential of modern liberal democracy".[9] Thus the way forward for Horne was to shift the benchmark of Australian belonging from a cultural or a racial marker to a civic one. An "imagined civil contract" or "civic

[5] Donald Horne, "Something fishy in the mainstream?," in Helen Irving (ed), *Unity and Diversity: A National Conversation: Barton Lectures*, Sydney NSW: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2001, p. 8. Part of the ceremony involved school children saying what makes Australia great.
[6] John Hirst, "More or less diverse", in Irvin (ed), *Unity and Diversity*, p. 110. An abridged version of this lecture was published as "Envoi: Diversity and Unity" in John Hirst, *Sense and nonsense in Australian history*, Melbourne, Vic.: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009, p. 313.
[7] Horne, "Something Fishy in the mainstream?," p. 6.
[8] Ibid, p. 5.
[9] Ibid, pp. 11-12.

faith" *was* something that all Australians held in common, one that could encourage a true tolerance of diversity.[10]

For John Hirst, the idea of a civil contract was a "cold and cerebral formula" that ignored the existence of an ongoing Australian culture, one which had been "crucial" to the success of the post-war migrant programme.[11] In his view, it was the "easy-going, informal and egalitarian" nature of Australian society that had allowed for the peaceful absorption of millions of migrants. Prejudice and resentment were present, but amounted to "amazingly little".[12] Multiculturalism was the nonsense that had written this Australian culture out of history, and denigrated Anglo Australians circa 1940 as intolerant at best and incurably racist at worst.[13] Hirst felt Australians should hold together by "being Australian; by celebrating, exploring, criticising and reassessing our Australian heritage, all the things that have defined and still define what it means to be Australian and live in this place".[14] Knowledge of Australian history and culture was the key to this togetherness.

In one of these versions of Australian history, multiculturalism was an enlightened government policy; in the other it was to blame for cultural fragmentation and misunderstanding. Migration museums, which had begun as state institutions funded in part because they suited the agenda and aims of multiculturalism, were positioned at a difficult juncture in this debate. The first exhibitions of the mid-late 1980s passionately advocated for minority histories to be integrated into the Australian story. Experiences of racism, exploitation and cultural dislocation were an important part of migrants' memories. By contrast, exhibitions in the mid-late 1990s had to publicly reposition themselves as relevant to all Australians, distancing themselves from the ethnic group identities of early multiculturalism and instead encouraging all Australians to explore their individual migrant ancestries. In this version, having

[10] Ibid, p. 18.
[11] Hirst, "More or less diverse," p. 117.
[12] Ibid, p. 114.
[13] Hirst had previously voiced these views in 1990. This article, "Australia's Absurd History" was reproduced in John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*, Melbourne, Vic.: Black Inc. Agenda, 2009, pp. 11-23.
[14] Hirst, "More or less diverse," pp. 117-118.

immigrant ancestry was a marker of being Australian. It united, rather than divided "us".

But even this democratized 'nation of immigrants' story would be anathema for Hirst, who has since written scathingly of the demand in the Australian census for respondents to nominate their non-Australian heritage: "even those whose families have been here for four or six generations were meant to declare a European ancestry".[15] Many of these Australians, the ever-misnamed Anglos, Anglo-Celts, whites, settlers or 'old Australians', had never been drawn in by the narrative of migration, and instead preferred to identify with the older, pioneer story. Their cultural heritage, in Hirst's view, was not European, or British, but uniquely Australian.

In accounts of Australia's past and present in 2001, then, the tension between unity and diversity, or between the mainstream and minorities, was acute. And it centred on a fundamental disagreement about whether Australia was built on a British cultural heritage with peripheral multicultural influences, or whether this 'Australian' culture was just one of many migrant imports, held together through common respect, tolerance, and civic belonging (the former view was ideologically aligned with the government in power).[16] This tension was of particular significance for the NMA's exhibition of migration history.

Australia's birthday present

2001 marked not only the nation's centenary, but also one hundred years since the first calls for a national museum of Australian history. Submissions to the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee Report of August 1994 drew on this confluence to make a case for full Commonwealth funding to construct the museum.[17] The committee agreed, and argued that:

[15] Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*, p. 12.
[16] See Brett, *Australian liberals and the moral middle class*, pp. 195-196.
[17] Margaret Coaldrake, the then-director of the NMA, wrote "2001 will also be the centenary of the first call for a national museum of Australian history". Quoted in Council of Australian Governments, Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee, *2001, A report from Australia*, p. 34.

> The National Museum would represent the symbolic heart of the nation, a place where traditions, histories and ideas are brought together through the material culture of both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.[18]

However, as we have seen, building yet another museum in Canberra was not a priority for the Keating Government.[19] Instead, the opposition seized the opportunity to deliver on Labor's "broken promise", and funding the National Museum in time for 2001 became the cornerstone of their proposed arts policy.[20]

Once in office, Prime Minister John Howard fulfilled the promise by including $1.5 million for initial design reports and site recommendations in his Government's first budget. However the museum community was torn by the seemingly contradictory decision to make funding cuts to existing cultural institutions including the National Film and Sound Archive, the Australian War Memorial and the National Maritime Museum.[21] Howard's prioritization of the NMA project was clearly informed by the high-profile celebrations for the Centenary of Federation, and by his avowed interest in familiarising Australians with the proud "balance sheet" of their nation's history.[22] Rather than realising the old plans to build the museum at Yarramundi Reach, the NMA plan approved in December 1996 would see the new museum on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin, nearer to the city and close to the Australian National University. The reintegration of the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia within the museum and the building of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies next door on "Canberra's finest piece of real estate" were important initiatives and a public display of the government's advocacy of Indigenous cultural heritage.[23]

Dawn Casey, who was appointed as Acting Director of the NMA in April 1999, spoke of her vision for the new museum at the *National Museums, Negotiating Histories* conference at the Australian National University in Canberra in July of the same year:

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[18] Ibid.
[19] See Chapter 4, pp. 162-164.
[20] Liberal Nationals, *For Art's Sake – A Fair Go!,* Arts Policy Statement, February 1996, p. 13. PDF available from Parliament of Australia website: http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au.
[21] Roderick Campbell, "Our National Heritage Deserves Adequate Funding," *Canberra Times*, 4 September 1996.
[22] Attwood, *Telling the truth about Aboriginal history*, p. 34.
[23] Tony Wright, "At Last, A Museum For The Nation", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 December 1996, p. 3.

> The National Museum of Australia's opening in 2001 is part of the celebrations of Australia's centenary as a federated nation. There could be no better time to reconsider our national narrative, to negotiate our way through the conflicting demands of many stakeholders and explore new possibilities in the interpretation of Australia's history. A new museum cannot simply be the same old museum concept with new, improved technology. Change is at hand.[24]

Her work as acting director (and before that as the chief General Manager of the group building the NMA) was officially affirmed when Casey won the top job in a permanent capacity in December 1999, beating other head-hunted national and international applicants in the process.[25] One journalist hoped that her appointment would "add stability to what has been a very unstable project".[26] This was not to be.

Some on the museum's board did not think it appropriate for curators to reconsider national narratives. Criticism came in particular from two members - David Barnett and, to a lesser extent, Christopher Pearson.[27] Both Barnett and Pearson had close links to Howard –Barnett was his biographer and Pearson his speechwriter. Both shared his views on so-called "black armband" history. Their objections resulted in an audit of the museum's exhibitions by historian Graeme Davison (which found them to be groundless), and eventually a full review of the museum's exhibitions and programs led by sociologist John Carroll, known as the Carroll Review, in 2003.[28] These events brought the history-making processes of the NMA into the national spotlight, and exposed museum staff to intense public and professional scrutiny. Loudest among the critical voices was the right wing historian Keith Windschuttle, who questioned the veracity of a display on the Aboriginal massacre at Bells Falls Gorge in *First Australians: Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, and railed over the lightning bolt-shaped design of the building, which he claimed was inspired by the Jewish

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[24] Dawn Casey, "The National Museum of Australia: Exploring the past, illuminating the present and imagining the future," in McIntyre and Wehner (eds), *Negotiating histories: national museums*, pp.6-7.
[25] "Woman For Top Job at National Museum," *Canberra Times*, 20 December 1999, p. 1.
[26] Peter Gotting, "Boss Who Broke The Mould," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1999, p. 13.
[27] Dawn Casey, "Reflections of a National Museum Director," in Lake (ed), *Memory, Monuments and Museums*, p. 116; See also Kylie Message and Chris Healy, "A Symptomatic Museum: The New, the NMA and the Culture Wars," *borderlands e-journal*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2004, para 14: http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no3_2004/messagehealy_symptom.htm.
[28] For a brief summary of these events see Gerard Henderson, "Over the top in the culture wars," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 January 2003.

Museum in Berlin.[29] These events have since been historicized as a second flash point in Australia's ongoing "History Wars", and much is written about them.[30] Eclipsed by the media-fuelled storm was another of the museum's permanent galleries called *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788.*

"An attack on pluralism"[31]

In his comparative analysis of the NMA and New Zealand's national museum, Te Papa, James Gore noted that *Horizons* was one of three galleries that offered a national narrative of non-Indigenous belonging:

> ...*Eternity* interprets identity as being based on shared emotional experiences, *Horizons* suggests that this identity derives from Australia's existence as a settler society, while *Nation* attempts to explore Australian identity through a range of familiar symbols, which have been invented over time to create a shared sense of belonging and attachment to the nation... [my italics].[32]

This pluralistic structure, the idea that a national museum could, in Davison's words, "play host to several interpretations of the national past, stirring patriotic as well as critical, educationally demanding as well as entertaining", has been identified by Andrea Witcomb as the basis for the criticism of the non-Indigenous galleries by the Carroll Review panellists.[33] Witcomb's 2009 article is the only analysis of the Review to date that draws out its implications for migration history. In it she skilfully places the

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[29] Keith Windschuttle, "How Not to Run a Museum: People's History at the Postmodern Museum," *Quadrant*, vol. 45, no. 9, September 2001, 11-19. For a reply, see David Roberts, "The Bells Falls massacre and oral tradition," in Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict, The Australian Experience*, Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003, pp. 150-157.

[30] Graeme Davison has written of his experiences on a number of occasions. See "A historian in the museum: The ethics of public history" in Macintyre (ed), *The Historian's Conscience*, pp.49 – 63, and "What Should a National Museum Do? Learning from the World" in Lake (ed), *Memory, Monuments and Museums: The Past in the Present*, pp. 91 – 109. Dawn Casey also contributed to the latter publication, reflecting on her time at the museum and defending the curators' interpretation of Australian history in the face of the "Orwellian" approach of the Howard Government. See Casey, "Reflections of a National Museum Director," in Lake (ed), Ibid. *Borderlands e-journal* devoted an entire issue to the NMA controversy in 2004 (vol. 3, no.3). The debate was also taken up in the right-wing journal *Quadrant*, most notably by historian Keith Windschuttle and also by Rob Foot. See Windschuttle, "How Not to Run a Museum", and "Social History and Aboriginal Legends: A Reply to Gary Morgan," *Quadrant*, vol 46, no. 4, April 2002, 23-31. See also Rob Foot, "Rehabilitating Australia's National Museum," *Quadrant*, vol. 52, no. 10, October 2008, 23-29.

[31] Witcomb has argued that the "real purpose" of the Carroll Review was "very much an attack on pluralism." See Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," p. 61.

[32] James Gore, "Representations of Non-Indigenous History and Identity in the National Museum of Australia and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, *The Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, 2003: http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/gore.htm, 'Conclusion'.

[33] Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," p. 61.

criticisms of the NMA in parallel with Howard's reaction to the MV *Tampa* incident, September 11, and even to the riots that erupted on Sydney's Cronulla beach in 2005. Just as Howard's language calls on "them" (Islamic migrants) to demonstrate their "total commitment to this country" and "adopt Australian ways", so the panellists of the Carroll Review call for a more cohesive, "integrated narrative", or a single story of Australian history. In a political climate where "difference became a problem not a virtue", the presentation of cultural diversity through the lens of migration history was not favoured.[34] Rather than beginning the migrant story with the convicts, almost all the reviewers advocated scrapping the "peopling" approach in favour of a specific focus on the period from 1788 to 1901. The stories of later arrivals, increasing cultural diversity, and immigration restriction, could be encompassed through individual spotlights in *Nation* and in *Eternity*.

But, as we have seen, previous migration exhibitions at the ANMM, the Immigration Museum, and to some extent at the MMSA in Adelaide had all pursued a positive narrative of arrivals, nation building and productive cultural diversity. So the review panel's objections to *Horizons* on the basis of its failure to convey "exemplary individual, group and institutional achievements" is at first curious.[35] The content of the exhibition, and how it was different from what came before, thus, bears closer examination.

Witcomb suggests that *Horizons* exemplifies a "trend to develop more exploratory and insightful [migration] exhibitions" particularly in its adoption of a "structural perspective" on migration history, highlighting immigration restriction, quarantine regulations and the construction of citizenship.[36] Yet in the space of a journal article that canvasses multiple exhibitions and tackles complex political history, there was little room for a close textual analysis of *Horizons'* themes, its methods of display and its history within the NMA. It is this closer analysis that I would like to pursue here,

[34] Ibid p. 59.
[35] Carroll Review quoted in Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," p. 62.
[36] Ibid, p. 57.

while simultaneously drawing links between the stories told in *Horizons*, and those told in migration history exhibitions in Australia over the previous sixteen years.

Journeys/Currents/Horizons

An exhibition of large historical scope, *Horizons* was hampered by a small space. It occupied the least attractive real-estate of the Acton building, which provided exhibition space that was approximately one third that of the Powerhouse Museum.[37] The limits of the gallery shaped both the content of the exhibition and the style of its displays. Ian McShane, who was the exhibition co-ordinator of the 1995 exhibition *Tolerance*, led the curatorial team. However, by the time the NMA opened in 2001, McShane had left the museum and others in the team took over. Like most exhibitions, *Horizons* had many authors, and represents the final realisation of a long lineage of ideas and planning. It started life as *Journeys*, before being renamed *Currents*, then briefly *Life Lines*, and then taking on its final title. *Horizons* bore the imprint of all these abandoned and modified plans.

The *Journeys* idea proposed by McShane in May 1998 was based on his perception of how migration history had previously been presented in Australian museums. He explained in the program brief:

> Australian museums have usually approached this general subject area [journeying] through its most obvious aspect – the migration of people to Australia. [But] Journeys also deals with place and displacement within Australia – for example, the removal of indigenous people from traditional lands, and the overland journey of farmers from marginal land in South Australia to more fertile areas of Victoria and New South Wales.[38]

Inclusivity was at the heart of this plan, and the "migration experience" was conceptualised as "a touchstone of Australian culture". The attempt to include Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike in this "migration experience" seems a more sophisticated version of the Australian Bicentennial Authority's travelling exhibition *The Great Australian Journey*. McShane described the approach:

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[37] Geraldine O'Brien, "Century's Dream Takes Shape," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1999, p. 5.
[38] Ian McShane, "Journeys Program Brief," 2 May 1998, NMA Administrative File 01/978 Registration Documentation Team – Action Exhibition Development & Installation 1999-2001 – Horizons Exhibition.

> At a metaphorical level, the title is intended to suggest that the Australian national community consists of people who have taken many different journeys, and that we are together on a journey of understanding about the past, present and future of a diverse society. This is the high-level narrative that threads the program elements together.[39]

McShane envisioned multiple recreations and large objects within the exhibition through which different aspects of journeying could be explored, such as a quarantine station interior, a section of a Nissen hut from Pennington Migrant Hostel, and the wheelhouse of the Hong Hai refugee boat. A focus on the 19th century Empire migration schemes was intended to balance what McShane saw as a long held association between post-war migrants, multiculturalism, and migration exhibitions.[40] A section on Aboriginal mission stations and reserves would unite their stories through the theme of forced migration.[41] But an overlapping of material with other galleries, in particular *Nation* and *Eternity*, and the lack of space for recreations, turned curators back to a pattern of arrivals. The concept of internal migration was largely lost. Some important vestiges of *Journeys*, including the focus on quarantine, and ideas of home, place and exile were maintained.

Journeys became *Currents*. The five areas of this brief, dated June 1999, were outlined as: Possession, Visions & Opportunity, Defining Ourselves, Home, and The Big Picture.[42] These roughly equated to a chronological history of migration to Australia in three parts, followed by two areas of historically overarching interactives and installations. The chronology began with first contact and the transportation era, followed by a section on assisted migration programs in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a section on border control, fears of invasion, and White Australia, an installation displaying letters and personal communication, and finally a demographic section which was to include a database of information from James Jupp's encyclopedia, *The Australian People*, and an "interactive, flat screen projection map of

[39] Ibid.
[40] McShane expounded on these ideas in his article "Challenging or Conventional," which is discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, pp. 13-15.
[41] McShane, "Journeys Program Brief," p. 3-4.
[42] Anon, "Currents Message Brief," 8 June 1999, NMA Administrative File 01/978 Registration Documentation Team – Action Exhibition Development & Installation 1999-2001 – Horizons Exhibition.

the world showing Australia's trading networks, travel routes and population flows".[43] Again plans were condensed. The map was cut, though a similar one appeared in a prominent position in the *Nation* gallery instead, with "interactive displays about the country's weather, topography, population, exploration and environment".[44] Alternative gallery names were mooted, and for a short time it was referred to as *Lifelines*. But eventually the poetic and rather ambiguous name *Horizons* was adopted.

In the eventual *Horizons* exhibition the five broad themes of *Currents* were divided into ten modules, plus an audio-visual program and two interactive database stations. Curators made the most of the restricted space by displaying the objects and stories in a traditional glass case-style setting, with each case dedicated to a different sub-theme or story (see Figure 12). The ten modules were arranged in chronological order – Encounters, Contact, Prison without Walls, Getting and Spending, Visions of Order and Goodness, Coming to Work, Keeping Guard, Populate or Perish, Sanctuary, and Home.[45]

[43] Ibid.
[44] National Museum of Australia, *Land, Nation, People*, p. 72.
[45] An extra section, 'Settlers and Settling,' was added in 2002.

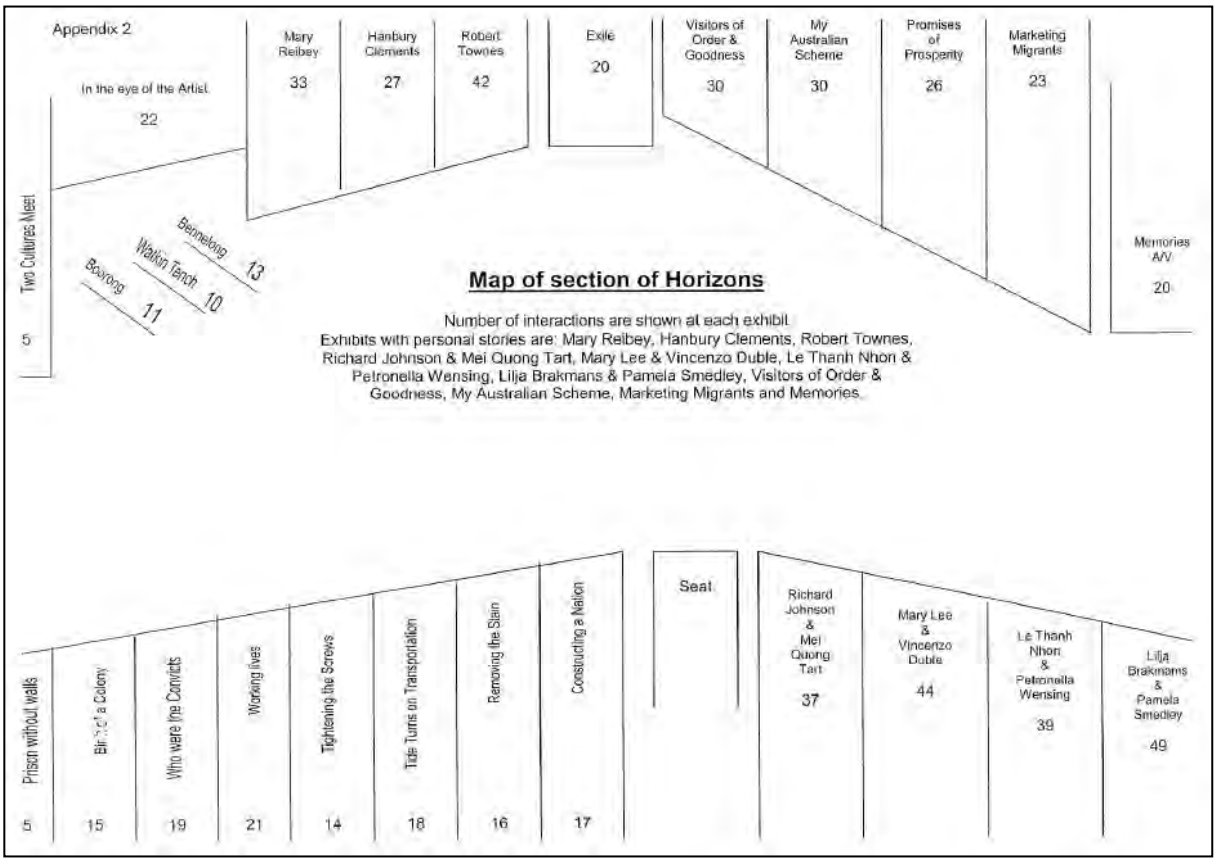

Figure 12. Floorplan of *Horizons*, NMA Administrative File 02/65 Acton – Evaluation – Horizons.

This floor plan shows six of the ten modules in *Horizons*. Those not shown are Keeping Guard, Populate or Perish, Sanctuary and Home.

Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788

Although the exhibition was designed as a chronological tour through Australia's migration history, visitor evaluations suggest that this layout was not obvious to those who entered the exhibition from the western stairs, and a lack of signage left some disorientated. Those who did take the intended route came first to the only recreation of the exhibition - an artificial midden (it is not shown in Figure 12, but would have been to the left hand side, leading into 'Two Cultures Meet').[46] This innovative installation displayed archaeological remains from an excavation at Disaster Bay on the southern New South Wales coast.[47] On display were actual artefacts found at the site including shellfish, discarded tools, and remains of shoes from the post 1788 period. The display, called 'Layers of history', explained how archaeologists, like detectives

[46] Joanne Bach, "Visitor Statistics/Audience Research Report," Horizons, November/December 2001, NMA Administrative File 02/65 Acton – Evaluation – Horizons, p. 3. File includes note by Rod Nichols, "Horizons Gallery Survey – December 2001." Nichols was a volunteer gallery attendant who recorded his observations of how people encountered the exhibition.

[47] Encounters section, 'Terra Nullius' panel, NMA, "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.

using clues, dated the remains to prove the longevity of the area as a camp site used by Aboriginal people for hundreds of years. The arrival of the first Europeans in 1788 was situated as a part of this longer history of occupation, not as a subsequent wave of arrivals. The label "Unearthing culture" read "Metal shoe eyelets and fragments of glass worked into tools are evidence of trade and exchange", emphasising the coexistence of these two cultures on the east coast at the end of the 18th century. As at the IM in Melbourne and the MMSA before it, Indigenous Australians provided the starting point for the history of European immigration. But here in *Horizons* more exhibition space was dedicated to the relationships between the British and Aborigines, particularly during the early years of the town at Sydney Cove.

The theme of 'Encounters' was divided into two subthemes: 'The Idea of Empire', and 'Terra Nullius'. The first explored Australia's place as a part of the British Empire, contextualising it within the broader history of imperialism, global expansion and colonisation:

> *A vast Empire of rules and values*
>
> *Britain's arrival in Australia in 1788 formed one chapter in the long story of the British Empire. After colonising the Americas in the 17th century, Britain went on to occupy large parts of Africa, Asia, the South Pacific and the Middle East.*
>
> *Trade and military strategy were the engines of Empire. Colonisers and their descendants believed that British rule brought order and enterprise to untamed lands. Aboriginal peoples, however, told different stories*.[48]

The meaning and significance of the Union Jack in the rise and fall of the British Empire was illustrated by maps and images of the flag being raised, or lowered – in Palestine in 1948, in Nairobi as Kenya achieved independence in 1963, and at the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997. These symbolic events provided a transnational context for the colonisation of Australia.

A section called 'Ripping yarns' explaining how empire "meant excitement and danger to children" was documented by adventure books such as the *Empire Annual for Australian Boys*, 1910, and Australian scouting memorabilia. The spread of the English

[48] Encounters section, 'The Idea of Empire' panel, NMA, "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.

language, hunting as an important practice of empire and the planting of English gardens in imperial outposts – a practice of "transplanting the familiar into their adopted homes", were other ways in which migration to Australia as a part of the British Empire was explored and contextualised.[49] Importantly, this section of the exhibition also explicitly addressed the role of museums in the Empire, and the collecting of 'exotic cultures' as the reason for their initial existence. Noting that "today the ownership and control of many of these objects is disputed by descendants of the original makers", curators chose to display a variety of colonial souvenirs not just from Australia, but also from Madagascar, Fiji, South Africa, India and New Zealand.[50] The final story in this section was a display of the Empire Christmas Pudding, a recipe produced by the Empire Marketing Board in 1928 to encourage the sale of Empire goods to the British public (among them currants from Australia, eggs from the Irish Free State, cinnamon from Ceylon and rum from Jamaica).[51] While *Colonization or Invasion* at the MMSA (1986), *Australian Communities* at the PHM (1988) and *Tolerance a*t the NMA (1995) had all included sections on Australia's relationship to Empire, *Horizons* located Australia as just one outpost of the British world, and demonstrated how this shaped Australian culture as well as politics. This global or transnational context reflected an important conceptual shift in the study of Australian history, which I will return to later.

Having positioned Australia in the context of the British Empire project, the exhibition narrative then turned to the contested basis for the colonisation of the country – the doctrine of terra nullius. The overturning of the doctrine in the 1992 Mabo High Court case, and the rich historiography on Aboriginal history written since the 1980s, had

[49] 'The Garden of Empire' panel, NMA, "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[50] 'Collecting Cultures' panel, NMA, "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[51] National Museum of Australia, *Land, Nation, People*, p. 61.

clearly informed this section, which was called 'The Lie of the Land'.[52] But the political sensitivity of the topic meant it needed to be carefully worded. In his review of the exhibition text, Graeme Davison suggested Henry Reynolds' definition of terra nullius as "a land belonging to no-one" instead of "unowned land", used in the original draft.[53] Davison also questioned the content of a related label titled 'Invasion and Exchange'. It seems from Davison's notes and those of Mike Sexton of Sexton Marketing Group, who was a member of the museum's board and also reviewed the text during development, that this label argued the Yuin people of the South Coast region "owned their country" and in their quest to defend it from "invading Europeans", killed some of them. The label suggested this defence was evidence of "the lie of terra nullius".[54] Both Davison and Sexton questioned this use of the term "invasion" - Davison noting that it seemed to go a step beyond the High Court's Mabo judgement of 1992. Sexton wrote that "the term invasion implies a planned, strategic, military attack directly against the people inhabiting a land". He also questioned the use of the term "owned", noting that it might inflame racial tension rather than challenge visitors. Perhaps as a result of these concerns, the problematic panel 'Invasion and Exchange' was not included in the exhibition. The Yuin peoples' ownership of their land *was* asserted, but in the midden recreation section, which stated "In their use if the land every day for hunting, fishing and harvesting, the Yuin cared for, and owned, their country".[55] The final 'Terra Nullius' panel plainly explained the context of the term, as well as its contemporary significance, while avoiding the word "invasion":

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[52] Examples are Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia,* Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1982; Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, 1987; and Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: land in Aboriginal politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin in association with Black Books, 1996. For an excellent overview of the historiography on Aboriginal Australians see Ann Curthoys, "Aboriginal history," in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 2001, Oxford Reference Online, http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?entry=t127.e5&srn=1&ssid=272036834#FIRSTHIT.

[53] Graeme Davison, "Review of Horizons text," 29 May 2000, NMA Administrative File 00/646 Acton – Horizons Exhibition – Administration.

[54] Mike Sexton, "Review of text groups from the Horizons program including Sanctuary, Encounters and Getting and Spending," 2 June 2000, NMA Administrative File 00/646 Acton – Horizons Exhibition – Administration.

[55] Encounters section, 'A cultural landscape' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.

> *European explorers of Australia encountered an unfamiliar landscape. They found no tilled fields, no recognisable towns. They concluded that Aboriginal people did not own this land. This belief, that Australia was terra nullius – 'a land belonging to no-one' – justified European colonisation.*
>
> *In 1992 the High Court rejected the idea of terra nullius as unjust and discriminatory, and recognised Native title*.[56]

The second theme, 'Contact', included three subsections – 'Two Cultures Meet', 'In the Eye of the Artist', and a personal spotlight section on three important figures from the first years of the colony at Sydney Cove – Bennelong, Watkin Tench and Boorong. Visitors were presented with the documentary evidence of the first years of co-existence, and the context in which these records were made.[57] Bearing a striking similarity to the 'Contacts and Encounters' section of *Tolerance*, this theme used European artists' representations of Aboriginal people as a way to explore Indigenous/settler relations. In *Tolerance* six years earlier, the exhibition text had stated:

> *Early settlers saw indigenous people as savages. Colonial artists caricatured indigenous people as primitive people in a strange landscape*.[58]

However, in *Horizons* curators gave the images a more nuanced reading:

> *Seeing the new*
>
> *Many early European sketches and paintings of Aboriginal people look strange and distorted to modern eyes. Artists were trying to make sense of something new and unfamiliar. Some of them drew on romantic ideas, portraying Aboriginal people as 'noble savages' or 'children of nature'. Others presented Aboriginal people as menacing or comic.*[59]

The curiosity and good will that were evident in many exchanges were acknowledged, while the historical context that shaped how the colonists saw Indigenous people and the new landscape was also explained. Ten works from artists such as Thomas Watling, William Westall and the Port Jackson painter were on display, demonstrating the variety of artistic interpretation at the time. Rather than just caricaturing the 'natives',

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[56] Encounters section, 'Terra Nullis' introduction panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[57] Contact section, 'Two Cultures Meet' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[58] 'Contacts and encounters' panel, NMA "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," 12 September 1995, NMA Administrative File 0122 Marketing: Development – Financial. Assistance for Exhibition: "International Year of Tolerance".
[59] Contact section, 'Seeing the new' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.

these works displayed what historians like Inga Clendinnen and Grace Karskens would later demonstrate – the complex and at times contradictory relations between the two cultures in the first years of settlement.[60]

There was a strong emphasis the convict experience in *Horizons*, told through the two themes of 'Prison without Walls' and 'Getting and Spending'. Some important items from the museum's collection, including a convict jacket from the 1860s and archaeological artefacts from the Rocks area in Sydney, were utilised to tell stories of hardship and penal life, but also told of the legacy of convict labour (in 'Building the Nation', a section about the Great North Road) and of the entrepreneurship of many convicts who had families, businesses and made a success of their circumstances. There was a clear mission to overturn the stereotype of the convict-in-chains, and to reveal the changing nature of convict life as regulations tightened in the 1820s and sites of secondary punishment were established. The adoption of this approach reflects the histories published in the 1980s and 1990s that had revaluated the convict period in Australian history.[61] The anti-transportation movement was also documented, together with paraphernalia such as anti-transportation league flags, medals, and parliamentary papers tracking the debate. Graphs and statistics answered questions such as 'Where did convicts come from?', 'What crimes did convicts commit?' and 'Where were convicts sent?' Most interestingly, the changing perceptions of Australia's convict heritage were explored, from a shameful "birthstain," to a proud passion of family historians. An image from the Launceston Pioneer Festival in 1935 demonstrated this shift in public thinking. Of the thousands of people dressed up in nineteenth century costume, no-one came in convict clothes. The long fascination with our convict heritage was also historicized – from the late nineteenth century tourism has capitalised on sites such as Port Arthur and recreations such as the *Success*, a floating convict museum complete with waxwork convicts in chains. The contribution of writers, historians and filmmakers to our ideas about

[60] See Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003, and Grace Karskens, *The Colony: a history of early Sydney*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009.
[61] For example, John Hirst, *Convict society and its enemies: a history of early New South Wales*, Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1983 and Grace Karskens, *The Rocks: life in early Sydney*, Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1997.

convict history was addressed in a display of important books and films such as Marcus Clarke's 1874 novel *For the Term of his Natural Life* and Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore*. These segments all revealed how ideas about Australia's convict past have been shaped by both fear and fascination.[62]

The 'Getting and Spending' personal spotlights told the life stories of some ex-convicts and free immigrants such as wealthy entrepreneur Mary Reiby, and the merchant Robert Towns, who ran sugar plantations in Queensland with the labour of thousands of Melanesian 'kanakas'.[63] More personal stories were told in 'Visions' – in particular the "immigrant's friend", Caroline Chisholm, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, whose theory of "systematic colonisation" was the basis for the settlement of South Australia. 'Visions' bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, concentrating on the grand schemes that brought migrants out from the 'old country' to the new. Early non-British migrants, were represented by a group of Lutherans who fled from religious persecution in Prussia to settle in South Australia, and a group of Italians who found refuge in New South Wales in 1881 after the colony they were destined for in New Guinea failed. The latter was a story previously untold in migration exhibitions; the former was of course part of the MSMA's opening galleries in 1986. 'Promises of Prosperity' told the heartbreaking story of post-World War I British migrants to Western Australia. Known as the 'Groupies', as they came in family groups, these people fell victim to a poorly organised immigration scheme devised by the British and Western Australian governments. Items including a saw used by migrants to clear the "heavily timbered" and "poor quality land" they were allotted were loaned from Northcliffe Pioneer Museum. The ways in which migrants' fates had been arbitrarily shaped by the grand plans and vested interests of individuals and governments was the uniting theme of these disparate stories.[64]

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[62] Prison without Walls section, 'Removing the stain', 'Untainted pioneers' and 'Balancing the books' panels, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[63] Getting and spending section, various labels, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[64] Visions section, 'Guardian angel of her helpless sex', 'Systematic colonization', 'From Prussia to South Australia', 'Accidental Australians – the framers of new Italy' and 'Promises of prosperity' panels, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

In 'Marketing Migrants' the larger story of organised post-Second World War migration was told through the frame of government policy, and its implementation by Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell and the Department of Immigration. Like earlier migration exhibitions, this section explained the selection process of migrants from the DP camps in Europe, and the initial preference for "Beautiful Balts" due to their fair features. It also touched on "milestones" that were made into public relations spectacles such as the arrival of the 50,000th European migrant, a pretty blonde Latvian girl named Maira Kalnins, in 1949, and British newlywed Barbara Porritt's celebrated arrival as the millionth postwar migrant in 1955. Photographs from the Department of Immigration illustrated the public relations campaign aimed at convincing Australians that the new arrivals were hard working, assimilable citizens, who would not threaten Australian jobs or wages, or the 'Australian way of life'.[65]

Following 'Visions' was the theme of 'Coming to Work'. Eight personal stories, divided in pairs across four display cases, spanned the entire post-1788 period. Uniting the lives of all these migrants was their ambition to make a new life, and to build it through their own hard work. The mix of personalities was somewhat eclectic, and not all stayed and settled in Australia. Richard Johnson, Australia's first clergyman who arrived in 1788, returned to England "defeated and ill" in 1801. The 'tools' of his trade – a bible and communion chalice – were on display. Petronella Wensling, a Dutch migrant, and Lilija Brakmanis, from Russia, were both examples of post-war displaced persons, but with very different experiences. While Wensling's skills in dressmaking and crafts were recognised in Australia and helped her feel "accepted in the community", Brakmanis was initially unable to practice in her profession of dentistry, despite having her qualifications translated into English before arrival. Le Thanh Nhon, a Vietnamese man who arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1975, was a Melbourne tram conductor for many years. Following an assault at work he left his job and began sculpting and painting as he had done in Vietnam, where he was a well-known artist. He described the process as sculpting the "sorrow of broken lives". One famous migrant who featured in this section was Mei Quong Tart, the Chinese/Australian

[65] Visions section, 'Building a nation', 'Chosen with care', 'Marking milestones', 'Millionth postwar migrant' and 'Everyone benefits' panels, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

businessman of the nineteenth century who had also featured in the first exhibition of migration history at Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1984.[66] In *Horizons* his life was explored in a different way – not just a man 'caught between two cultures', he was represented as a father and a progressive employer, who "paid his workers meal allowances and holiday and sick pay". Vincenzo Duble, a Sicilian barber who established a successful business in Melbourne was included as an example of Italian pre-War migration. The economic depression in Italy led many men to migrate to Australia in the 1920s and 30s in the hopes of securing employment and bringing out their families in the future. Mary Lee arrived in Adelaide in 1879 to care for her seriously ill son. After his death she stayed, becoming a social and political reformer. Her story was contextualised by a panel on women's immigration and suffrage in Australia. Finally there was Pamela Smedley, who arrived as a 12 year old British child migrant after the Second World War. At 15 she was sent to work on a sheep station where she cooked and cleaned for shearers - a lonely and isolating experience for a girl who longed for a home and family. For the exhibition she lent the Museum her most precious object, a miniature English cottage that she bought with her first pay to remind her of her home country.[67]

What messages do these eight stories convey about migrants to Australia? Curators had gone to much trouble to achieve a representative selection. There was an even mix of men and women, older and younger migrants, different cultural backgrounds and time periods. Pamela Smedley's story revealed a little-known aspect of Australia's immigration history – that British child migration schemes were in operation from the 1860s until the late 1960s, and in many cases, children who were told they were orphans actually had parents in Britain who were unaware they had been emigrated. This history was only just being uncovered in the late 1980s and became known to many Australians following the screening of the television mini-series *The Leaving of*

[66] See Chapter 1, pp. 79-80/
[67] Coming to work section, various panels, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

Liverpool in 1992.[68] Witcomb has observed that the focus on work and working lives was a way to question the persistent myth of the 'fair go'.[69] Certainly, the stories of at least half of the migrants portrayed were laced with heartbreak, hardship and pain. Even those who could be considered "migrant success stories" had lives and identities which transcended their migration experience, for example Mary Lee's political activism and Vincent Duble's long-running business. The portrayal of Richard Johnson's migration in a negative light was a curious choice, as his years in the colony were filled with as much success as they were frustration.[70] However, it did serve to highlight patterns of return migration which have always proved a challenge for curators of migration exhibitions, given the lack of objects and memories left behind when people leave. Similarly, the display about Le Thanh Nhon emphasised a difficult time in his life. A carving of a Buddha by Mr Le's had been included in the 1995 NMA exhibition *Tolerance*, where links were drawn between his successful migration to Australia and the popularity of his son, Hung Le, "Australia's only Vietnamese stand up comic."[71] *Horizons* pursued a more complex representation of his story. The selection of non-British migrants from before the Second World War (Duble and Quong Tart) and British

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[68] The first major published work on the British child migration schemes was Philip Bean and Joy Melville's *Lost children of the empire*, London: Unwin Hymar, 1989. The book took its name from a television documentary screened in the UK in May of that year, which uncovered the history of forced child migration and the work of the Child Migrants Trust, established by social worker Margaret Humphreys, in reuniting former child migrants with their families. One of the former child migrants featured was Pamela Smedley. See Joanna Mack (producer/director), *Lost Children of the Empire*, Granada Television, first televised 9 May 1989. This documentary inspired a dramatic treatment*, The Leaving of Liverpool*, a television miniseries in two parts co-produced by the ABC and the BBC (Directed by Michael Jenkins and produced by Steve Knapman). It was first screened in Australia on 8-9 July 1992 and in the UK on 15-16 July the following year. Humphreys wrote of her experiences working with former child migrants, and the effect the television documentary and drama had in encouraging more to come forward, in *Empty Cradles*, London: Doubleday, 1994. By the late 1990s more academic histories had been published, and no doubt aided museum curators in exhibiting these stories. See, for instance, Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and child migration*, Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1998; Alan Gill, *Orphans of the empire: the shocking story of child migration to Australia*, Milsons Point NSW: Random House Australia, 1998; and Barry Coldrey and the National Archives of Australia, *Good British stock: child and youth migration to Australia* (research guide), Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 1999.

[69] Witcomb, "Migration, social cohesion and cultural diversity," p. 57.

[70] Johnson was one of the best farmers in the colony, financed the building of his own church when the colonial government refused to (he was later recompensed) and acted as both a chaplain and a civil magistrate. See K.J. Cable, "Johnson, Richard (1753–1827)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/johnson-richard-2275/text2921.

[71] Hung Le was described in this way in the 1994 documentary *What's So Funny*, which was screened in the 1995 NMA exhibition *Tolerance*. See Chapter 4, p. 189.

migrants from across the post-1788 period (Johnson, Lee and Smedley) disrupted any possible bifurcation into 'monocultural' and 'multicultural' Australia. Most were not well-known or celebrated migrants, but ordinary people, united thematically by their pursuit of work and stability. As an early exhibition brief reveals, curators wished to convey the message that "migrants did not come to Australia as migrants but as workers."[72] Personal identity, constituted through work, hobbies, cultural heritage, family and life experience, lay at the heart of these stories. But unlike at the MMSA in 1986, where people featured in the 'Mosaic of Multiculturalism' video were chosen because of their practice of (non-Anglo) cultural traditions, the working-life approach displaced ethnicity from the centre of the migration story.

Personal identity was also used as a way to address contemporary Australian concerns and politics surrounding migration. *Horizons* explored these issues to a greater extent than earlier migration exhibitions, and it reflected the debates about Australian culture and national identity during the Centenary of Federation. In 'Keeping Guard', the subtheme of 'Defining Ourselves' included this text panel:

> *Migration and Identity*
>
> *Debates about migration reflect ongoing concerns about the make-up and spread of Australia's population. Underlying anxieties about security, loyalty and identity have driven opposing campaigns for expanding and restricting migration. Would migrants take the jobs of other Australians? Would they divide the community? What kind of migrants should Australia accept? Could these migrants fill the country's empty spaces?* [73]

On the wall next to the panel the following words were spread out, each in a different font and size:

alien *foreigner* *citizen* *migrant* *Australian* *refugee* *settler*[74]

Curators were gesturing to an important issue at the heart of migration history: how we define ourselves and others. Who is an outsider, and who is Australian? In the PHM's 1988 *Australian Communities* gallery, spotlights on distinct communities, and in

[72] "Currents Message Brief," 8 June 1999, NMA Administrative File 01/978.
[73] Keeping Guard section, 'Defining ourselves' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[74] Foldout image of 'Defining ourselves' graphics, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

particular children's experiences, were used to explore these same issues. But in *Horizons*, the concepts of nationality and citizenship were the windows through which identity was explored historically.

In 'Questions of Loyalty: Subject, alien or citizen?', the fragile nature of Australian belonging was demonstrated through the internment of Australian citizens of Italian and German origin during the First World War. The sectarian division between Protestant and Catholic settlers in the nineteenth century was illustrated by photographs of marches and the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868. A small display of Australian passports from 1934, 1936, 1950, 1952 and 1969 demonstrated the changing official views on citizenship and nationality. At different times the passports covers read either 'Australian' or 'British'. The exhibition text also pointed out that it was not until Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1948 that Australians became citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia for the first time, as well as British subjects. The main panel text noted "during war and other times of tension people with conflicting loyalties have faced discrimination and even imprisonment".[75] Twenty years earlier, the same topic was chosen for a display called 'Australians or Aliens?' at Adelaide's Constitutional Museum. It asked "How safe are the democratic rights of Australians of non-British descent?"[76] These histories had thus been told in Australian museums for decades. Yet the political context of 2001 gave them fresh importance.

The theme of citizenship also necessitated a reference to Indigenous Australians, who until this point had not appeared in *Horizons* since the colonial section. A panel explaining the significance of the 1967 constitutional referendum (in which over 90% of eligible Australians voted in favour of counting Indigenous Australians in the national census, and giving the Commonwealth Government the power to make specific laws in respect them), was accompanied by the display of a statutory declaration for application for citizenship rights under the Natives (Citizenship Rights)

[75] Keeping Guard section, 'Questions of loyalty, subject, alien or citizen?' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[76] See Chapter 1, p. 60.

Act 1944 from Western Australia. The fact that 'natives' had to apply for citizenship rights in Australia before 1967 is astonishing, something that many visitors may not have known. Aboriginal rights movements were explored in far greater depth in *First Australians: Gallery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples,* but the reference to this history in the 'migration exhibition' is notable, and signifies ideas from the earlier *Journeys* approach proposed by McShane. Along with forced migration, citizenship was a frame through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous belonging could be considered together.

Another notable section of *Horizons* was called 'Cleansing the nation'. Rather than just looking at how the White Australia policy restricted the arrival of undesirable immigrants, as previous exhibitions had done, curators here highlighted how ideas of whiteness were "part of everyday life."[77] This concept was illustrated through a collection of advertisements for household cleaning goods, such as "White Way cleaning preparation" made by Nutt and Jones in Sydney in 1926, the label of which depicted a smiling Aboriginal man with white palms exclaiming "dis will do".[78] Two years after *Horizons* opened, cultural historian Hsu-Ming Teo called for historians of migration history to use "whiteness" not only to expose racist cultural practices, but to question "how being white became normal and 'Australian'".[79] The display of cleaning products, the everyday items that Australians produced, sold, bought, and used only a couple of generations ago, conveyed these complex issues in an engaging and surprising way.

The rest of 'Keeping Guard' explored how the Australian government has controlled the nation's borders through immigration policy, quarantine and censorship. Some interesting documents such as a Dictation Test Exemption Certificate from 1931 were displayed, as well as some curious items such as a metal canister used for fumigating mail sent to and from the Torrens Island Quarantine Station in the 1950s and 1960s. Banned books, including Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the*

[77] Keeping Guard section 'Cleansing the nation' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[78] Keeping Guard section, 'Cleansing the nation' object labels and graphics, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[79] Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories," p. 151.

Rye, illustrated how changing social values affected what material was deemed morally permissible by successive governments. The centrality of the Immigration Restriction Act to the history of 'White Australia' was first communicated by the MMSA in 1986, and explored to varying degrees in all major migration exhibitions since. However in *Horizons* the Act was revealed as just one arm of an increasingly bureaucratic system of border control, affecting the entry of people, goods and ideas to Australia. Interestingly, there were similar plans to include quarantine as a theme in the opening exhibitions of the Immigration Museum in Melbourne three years earlier, but these never eventuated. The museum instead concentrated on the cultural diversity of Victorians. At the NMA curators were able to expand the theme of migration to include stories of quarantine and censorship, but sitting in the theme of "peopling Australia", they appeared to some a curious addition.

The next main theme, 'Populate or Perish', addressed the history of population control in Australia. The phrase is more often associated with the post-war period – after all, as the exhibition label stated, "Arthur Calwell used the phrase to promote European immigration". However, here curators stepped outside the migration narrative to look at Australian concerns which preceded the 1940s. A section called 'Breeding White Australia' explained the public campaigns to increase the birth-rate during the 1930s. Curators also addressed the early 20th century scientific question of whether white-skinned people could populate tropical areas, an acute anxiety for white Australians who were concerned about the 'yellow peril', or Asian invasion from the North. The main story illustrating this theme came from 1910, when the Commonwealth Government established the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville "to investigate the potential for European settlement in the North".[80] An Austrian researcher, Anton Breinl, was appointed as director of the Institute. His migration to Australia was not addressed; however the hot-air cabinet he created to observe his subjects under temperature-controlled conditions (which looks like a rather lovely piece of furniture with glass doors and brass heated bars inside) was displayed. Audience surveys later showed that this display proved confusing for some visitors

[80] National Museum of Australia, *Land, Nation, People*, p. 57; Populate or perish section, 'Taking the heat' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

who could not tell how the contraption related to the history of migration.[81] The attempt by curators to go beyond the migration experiences of individuals and to explore changing beliefs about settlement, race, and science was both unusual and resourceful. It allowed the display of fascinating items from the collection, but, as with the sections of censorship and quarantine, this diversion from the "peopling" theme added variety at the expense of coherence. As the visitor surveys suggest, some sections simply "didn't fit".[82]

The final two themes of *Horizons* were 'Sanctuary' and 'Home'. It was here that the history of refugee arrivals to Australia was told, a theme that had been exhibited controversially in *Tolerance* six years earlier. Some of the same stories and objects were used in both exhibitions. However, *Horizons* was spared the Department of Immigration interference the curators of *Tolerance* encountered. The main panel read:

> *Throughout history, people have been persecuted for their spiritual beliefs, political allegiances or ethnic identities. To stay in their homelands could mean hardship, imprisonment or death. Many refugees have sought sanctuary in Australia, and many have gone on to make Australia their home.*

The feature story in 'Sanctuary' was the journey of the *Hong Hai*, a Vietnamese fishing boat that carried 38 Vietnamese refugees from their home country to Darwin in 1978. The boat itself had been restored by the ANMM during a loan agreement and was awaiting display in the NMA's collection storehouse. Yet there was not enough space in the new museum building to include it.[83] Instead, the wheel of the restored ship was displayed in a large glass case, along with the clothes that one passenger, Tran Thi Ho, wore during the journey, binoculars used by the passengers to look out for dangers, such as pirates and storms, a replica of the Buddhist statue that stood on the ship, and a map showing the route taken through Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia during the 51 day journey. Text from the panel next to the objects, 'After Saigon', told the story:

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[81] Museum attendant Rod Nichols remarked in his report that "the humidity box doesn't seem to fit the theme too well". Nichols, "Horizons Gallery Survey – December 2001," NMA Administrative File 02/65 Acton – Evaluation – Horizons.
[82] Ibid.
[83] See Chapter 4 p. 173-174.

In November 1978, a spotter plane reported a Vietnamese fishing boat heading towards Darwin. The Australian Navy provided its passengers with fresh water and food and brought the vessel safely into port. The 3 people aboard told a story of hardship and illness, combined with ingenuity and remarkable feats of navigation. On their voyage they had also encountered sympathy and indifference.

Australians called these refugees, who came by sea, 'boat people'.[84]

Rather than portraying Vietnamese refugees as the latest arrivals in one of history's greatest migrations (as was done at the ANMM in 1998), curators chose to reveal the prejudice and anxiety that "boat people" continued to provoke in Australia. Next to the story of the *Hong Hai* was a large reproduction of a poster produced by the Australian nationalist political party, National Action (see Figure 13).

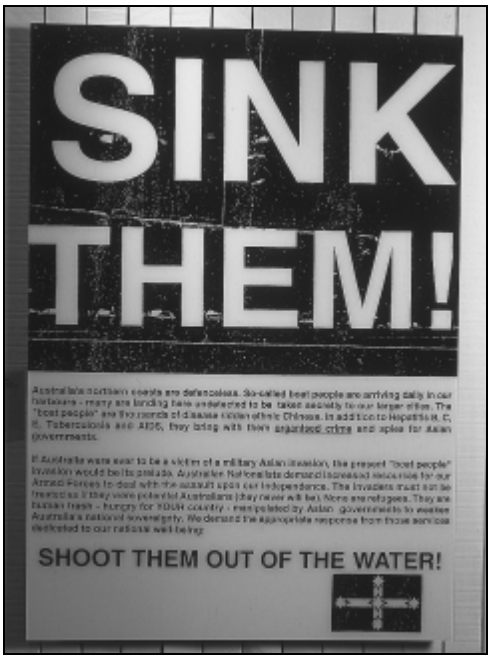

Figure 13: The National Action 'Sink Them' poster as displayed in *Horizons.* Photograph, NMA.

[84] Sanctuary section, 'After Saigon' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

The label accompanying the poster was understated:

> *A hostile welcome*
>
> *In 1995 the anti-immigration group National Action reacted harshly to the arrival of several refugee boats from China.*[85]

This poster had also been displayed in *Tolerance*, in the section on "cultural baggage". The text there had read "we all carry around attitudes and assumptions about other people. We are all capable of prejudice and intolerance".[86] Yet racism and intolerance were not explored in depth in *Horizons*. As a result the 'Sink them' poster appeared unmediated - and perhaps even tolerated. During the audience research survey of November/December 2001, many visitors noted their objection to the poster. Some did not see the accompanying label, and others thought it was inadequate. The poster had been enlarged and some saw this as problematic. One visitor felt compelled to write to the Museum, stating that he was "deeply offended" by the inclusion of the poster in the exhibition, and didn't believe the exhibition text adequately refuted this "foul propaganda".[87]

The poster was a shocking image, one that could have been better contextualised. Considering the limited impact of National Action (none of its members ever gained office in state or federal parliament), it may have been more relevant to address the rise of Pauline Hanson in the 1990s and the widespread sentiments she and her party, One Nation, gave voice to. But in *Horizons,* as in the immigration exhibition elsewhere in the late 1990s, any reference to current politicians was carefully avoided.

One popular part of 'Sanctuary' was an interactive called 'Refugee Journeys' that allowed visitors to browse personal stories from many refugees who settled in Australia in the second half of the twentieth century. These people had arrived from Bosnia in 1992, Vietnam in 1975, Sudan in 1997, Hungary in 1950, Chile in 1976 and

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[85] Sanctuary section, 'A hostile welcome' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[86] 'Tolerance' Panel, "Tolerance, all exhibition panels, images and text," 12 September 1995, NMA Administrative File 0122.
[87] Letter to National Museum of Australia from Dr T Lam, NMA Administrative File 95/0441 Correspondence: Australia Council – International Year for Tolerance Exhibition.

East Timor in 1975. One gallery attendant remarked that this exhibit was "well understood, enjoyed and many people seemed to work their way through the full content".[88] A list of major refugee arrivals to Australia accompanied the stories:

> *Refugee journeys*
>
> *1838 – 39 Hundreds of German Lutherans find safe haven in South Australia*
> *1938-39 Australia accepts 6,500 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany*
> *1941-45 Escaping Japanese aggression, thousands of Asians flee to Australia*
> *1947-53 More than 170,000 European victims of war and oppression arrive*
> *1975 Following Indonesian invasion, 1,800 East Timorese settle in Australia*
> *1975-84 Australia accepts more than 95,000 Vietnamese refugees*
> *1989 20,000 Chinese students permitted to stay after civil unrest in Tiananmen Square*
> *1999 4,000 Kosovo refugees receive temporary sanctuary in Australia.*[89]

Also prominently displayed was a panel titled 'Who is a refugee?' which quoted the standard definition from the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951.[90] The success of this section suggests that it fulfilled a current need. After the opening of The Immigration Museum in Melbourne in 1998, audience research found that people wanted more information about immigration policy and refugees. The use of timelines, statistics and interactives to provide such information had proved effective and popular in numerous migration exhibitions. In the midst of a politicized and media-hyped debate about immigration and asylum seekers, museums were seen as places where reliable and substantiated information could be found. Perhaps another need could also be identified: the desire of many Australians to see their history in a positive light, and to see themselves as members of a 'good nation' that provided sanctuary for those in trouble.[91]

Another interactive station was added to *Horizons* in October 2001.[92] It featured a program called 'Australia 2030', which had been developed for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) by the educational multimedia company

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[88] Nichols, "Horizons Gallery Survey – December 2001," NMA Administrative File 02/65.
[89] Sanctuary section, 'Refugee journeys' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[90] Sanctuary section, 'Who is a refugee?' panel read, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[91] See Elder, *Being Australian*, pp. 142-143, and Wills, "Un-stiching the lips of a migrant nation."
[92] 'Australia 2030' was installed on 8/10/2001. NMA Departmental File 05/198 Content Services – Publishing – Exhibition Text – Labels and Graphics – Horizons – 2002.

Ryebuck Media as a resource for high school students.[93] Although curators had no control over the content of the program, its themes were well suited to the exhibition. 'Vox pop' style videos of teenagers explored their different opinions on immigration, multiculturalism and Australian identity, including one girl who worried that immigrants might take Australian jobs and exploit the welfare system, and one "proud Australian" who wondered why it was hard for others to accept that she could be both Asian and Australian. These views were balanced by the 'Data Bank' section, where people could test their knowledge of the immigration system by choosing 'true' or 'false' in response to a series of statements. Misconceptions such as the dominance of China in the annual immigration intake (New Zealand was in fact the largest source of immigrants) were addressed, as well as environmental concerns and issues of sustainability. The program also included a rather superficial interactive timeline, which tracked the main changes in immigration policy and population numbers through different periods in Australian history, illustrated by immigration advertisements and historical photographs. DIMA's agenda was of course served by the educational package – overall immigration is portrayed as good for Australia, and immigrants are productive, diverse and grateful. "Boat people" are few and visa over-stayers are "visitors" who liked our country so much they tried to stay. Immigration history here is unthreatening and depoliticised. There is also the stamp of the Howard-brand of multiculturalism – the timeline entry for 1998 explains the concept of "Australian multiculturalism... where traditional culture is respected, but within a framework of active acceptance of and participation in core Australian values."[94]

A number of visitors surveyed in November and December of 2001 nominated 'Australia 2030' as the part of the exhibition they liked best, and gallery guide Rod Nichols agreed it "has some wonderful material in it."[95] Perhaps 'Australia 2030' was popular because it offered the facts, timelines and statistics that were lacking in the

[93] Robert Lewis, Tim Gurry and the Department of Immigration, *Australia 2030, investigating the facts of immigration [kit]: an educational interactive multimedia resource kit*, Malvern, Vic.: Ryebuck Media, 2001.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Bach, "Visitor Statistics/Audience Research Report," Horizons, November/December 2001, NMA Administrative File 02/65, p. 3; Nichols, "Horizons Gallery Survey – December 2001," NMA Administrative File 02/65.

gallery's exhibits - the information that some visitors needed to anchor them in the personal stories and broader migration themes of censorship and quarantine. However, the interactive was difficult to navigate as it had no clear indexing system. Nichols observed that for many visitors, especially older ones, 'Australia 2030' was "quite daunting" and they needed someone to show them how to use it. Some didn't realise it contained historical information, as the name suggested it was about the future rather than the past.

The final section, 'Home', was a reflection on the process of migration, meanings of home and the need to belong. The subtheme on 'Exile' explained that exiles are people "forced from their homes or lured away by fresh horizons". As a result, their memories of home may create a longing to return. Examples included the Vienna Mozart Boys' Choir, a group of travelling singers who were stranded in Australia when war broke out in 1939, and Sarah Thornton who was transported to New South Wales in 1813. Here Indigenous Australians were also included:

> *Aboriginal people have a strong attachment to their land. With the arrival of European settlers, many became exiles from the place where they and their ancestors had lived for thousands of years. By the 1960s the struggle of Aboriginal people for recognized land and other rights had attracted wider community support.*[96]

This section was illustrated with a collection of badges featuring the Aboriginal flag and printed with the phrases "pay the rent", "Aboriginal land rights" and "Aboriginal sovereignty". The term 'exile' offered an opportunity to conceive of Aboriginal people having similar experiences of dislocation and longing to migrants and refuges, similarities which McShane had suggested in the program brief for *Journeys*. The dictionary definition of 'exile' is "one compelled to reside away from his native land".[97] By substituting "home" for "native land", this last reflective section of the exhibition finally drew together the experiences of migrant and Indigenous Australians.

However, there remained a conceptual gap between the on-going cycles dispossession for Indigenous Australians, who may still hold ties to their original homelands despite

[96] Home section, 'Exile' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.
[97] "exile, n.2", OED Online, June 2011, Oxford University Press.

having been born elsewhere (in the instances where parents or grandparents had moved by force or choice), and the ties of non-Indigenous Australians. There were few stories in *Horizons* that explored the experience of second generation migrants, their identity, conception of 'home' or the communities of which they chose to be a part. The terminology of the rest of the panels in this section referred to 'migrants', not 'exiles', so presumably their experiences are not the same as Indigenous peoples. For instance, this panel on memories and home-making:

> *All migrants bring with them memories of home, keepsakes, and other reminders. New homes are often created from familiar things. For some, simply the glimpse of an old photograph or the fragrance of a special flower can spark associations that make any new place home.*[98]

Aboriginal people have also made new homes in new country. But it seems that the extent to which Indigenous Australians could be included in the migration narrative was limited to the 'exile' theme, and to the earlier first encounters and original dispossession. Curators must have been aware of the potential discomfort in equating the loss of Aboriginal lands through colonization and the loss of migrant's homelands through the act of migration. Any assertion of this kind would have implied an equivalent dispossession, thus undermining the important place of Indigenous people as the first Australians. But even the discussion of exile and homelands was a significant step away from previous representations of Indigenous Australians in migration exhibitions through themes of 'survival' or 'impact'.

More personal stories were told in this last section. Willian Kalf migrated to Australia from the Netherlands in 1950 and brought out his family and all the materials to build a traditional Dutch house, creating a novelty 'new Australians' media story for the papers. Manisha Amin and John Linton, a couple who married in Sydney in 2000 in a traditional Indian-style ceremony, sent video tapes of the ceremony to friends and relatives in England, India, the United States of America, Malaysia, Canada and Kenya. The panel 'Linking Kenya, India, and Australia' explained:

[98] Home section, 'Memories' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

> *The use of videotapes maintains strong personal links between family and friends in various parts of the world. For migrants, this form of communication keeps images of them alive for relatives and friends who they rarely see.*

Although true, this story seems rather simplistic and superficial. It has more to do with the possibilities of modern technology such as the internet and the change in global mobility due to cheaper air travel than with how and why 'migrants' communicate. Nowadays, this is how we all communicate! Here the limitations of the framework of arrivals and contributions seemed the most stretched and artificial. Adding some depth to the story was a photo of Manisha and her family in Nairobi, Kenya, where they lived during her childhood, although they visited family in India every two or three years. Their migration to Australia in 1974 was therefore her parents' second move. The possibilities for exploring generational shifts and changing perceptions of home abound in this family history, but the focus on the wedding video seemed more akin to the 'Letters Home' sections of earlier migration exhibitions.

At home

The final text panel of *Horizons* was called 'At home':

> *Home is where we live our lives, experiencing both the ordinary and exciting times. Home is where we can be ourselves. For many people, migration is the start of a search to discover where they are most truly at home.*[99]

Ideas of 'home' and 'exile' reveal an attempt to reposition the concept of 'migration', away from a national history of arrivals and towards a more complex and fluid search for personal identity that transcends national boundaries. As the panel on 'Exile' subtly suggested, it is possible to be displaced within your own country. It is also possible to be 'at home' in many places.

Unlike the Immigration Museum's *Impacts* gallery, there was no final display that revealed Australia as an immigrant nation built on a constellation of cultures. The last gallery of the MMSA's 1986 exhibitions had looked forward to a time when multiculturalism might characterise a new Australian identity. By 2001 that idea had peaked and plateaued. *Tolerance* had proclaimed Australia to be a multicultural

[99] Home section, 'At home' panel, NMA "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 2.

society, and tasked visitors with the responsibility for deciding "what sort of multicultural society we should have". *Tears, Fears and Cheers* revelled in "one of history's great migrations" in an attempt to get visitors to accept that "we are a migrant nation". But *Horizons* simultaneously alluded to a grand narrative of arrivals, and questioned it:

> *From the beginning of European colonization, ten million people have arrived in this country and made it their home.*
>
> *Why did they come? What were their hopes and visions? Did they achieve them? As Australia's population changes we continue to ask who we are and who we might be.*[100]

So while *Horizons* pursued a chronological "peopling" approach to Australia's history of immigration, it did not overtly democratise the migration story in attempt to conscript all Australians in the category of "migrant". It did not adhere to a national narrative, such as the 'nation of immigrants', the land of the 'fair go', the 'multicultural success story' or a people united by the experience of 'journeying'. Instead of resolving the narrative in the national frame in which it began, the theme of 'home' opened up the idea of place and belonging as central to the identity of the individual in a globalised world.

And because the 'peopling' narrative was left devoid of any of these possible positive endpoints, it embodied what Peter Mares has fittingly called the "contradiction at the heart of Australian nationalism", that is:

> Australia is an immigrant nation, yet for much of its history it has been absorbed with controlling its borders to prevent the entry of others.[101]

The confusion noted by some visitors to *Horizons*, who wanted a more coherent (or perhaps familiar) migration history, and the criticism of the Carroll Review, which denounced the lack of a proud-nation building theme in the gallery, can be seen as

[100] Horizons opening panel, "Horizons Exhibition Text," binder 1.
[101] Wills, "Un-stiching the lips of a migrant nation," 80, referring to Peter Mares, *Borderline: Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001, p. 5.

reactions to this underlying contradiction, and the curators' decision to leave it unresolved.

Conclusion: Immigration history beyond 'the nation'

A month after the NMA opened, historian Ann Curthoys delivered the keynote address at the Sixth Annual Museums Australia conference, 'Australian collections, Australian cultures: museums and identities in 2001,' in Canberra.[102] Drawing the delegates' attention to the conference theme, she asked "what we really mean by Australian, especially Australian cultures", especially as the idea of Australian history as a national project was really "only decades old". In debates about Australian culture during the Centenary of Federation, such as the one examined earlier between Horne and Hirst, what both sides shared was the importance and uncontested existence of national history itself. But as Curthoys explained, "national history in general, and Australian history in particular, has some severe limitations."[103] These histories tend to focus on what makes Australia and Australians different, and because this is often their purpose, they fail to take into account shared histories with societies elsewhere and the effect of global forces on the national story. They are concerned with Australian character (such as Hirst's insistence on the egalitarian and easy-going nature of Australians in 1940), and sense of identity (Horne's recoil from the white male Australian world of the Bulletin circa 1960 none the less assumed those attitudes were uniquely Australian). The intellectual tide had turned on national history, and, despite the ongoing importance of Australia as an "imagined community" and "political reality", Curthoys wanted to awaken her audience to the opportunities that a transnational perspective offered.

Rather than focus on what makes Australian history distinctive, or what holds Australians together despite their diversity, a transnational approach could tell new stories about what we share with societies elsewhere. The implications for migration history of new intellectual trends such as diaspora studies and identity formation were

[102] Ann Curthoys, "History for the Nation, or for the world?", Keynote address for 'Australian collections, Australian cultures: museums and identities in 2001', Museums Australia's Sixth National Conference, Canberra, 24 April 2001, http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/30569/20030113-0000/www.museumsaustralia.org.au/conference/index.htm.
[103] Ibid, p. 8.

already beginning to emerge, and, I would argue that they developed from the exhibitions of the 1980s and 1990s. The idea of 'cultural baggage', which curators adopted as a useful concept for exhibiting ideas about class, gender and race in the 1980s, was a precursor to the notion of a diaspora, one where migrants maintain a sense of belonging to multiple nations or places and develop networks that foster that belonging. Its most obvious example, in the Australian context, were the descendants of British migrants, for whom Britain remained 'Home', even after four or five generations. In Curthoys' words, "their diasporic experience undermines the simple notion of a single nation with a single history, morality and conscience."[104]

These conceptual changes were already underway. At the same time as *Horizons* was being developed, the MMSA was finally overhauling its opening 1986 exhibitions, thanks to a new injection of State funding. The result, as director Viv Szekeres later stated, was a change in the interpretation of immigration and settlement history:

> Currently, exhibitions reflect a greater awareness of how Australia's history is part of the larger global story of colonisation. They include individual and collective stories of immigration and settlement and the impact that the arrival of so many people from all over the world had and continues to have on Australia's Indigenous peoples.[105]

Both the MMSA and the Immigration Museum went on to produce exhibitions on the theme of personal identity, and the MMSA also produced a successful exhibition called *Home is where the Heart is: South Australian immigrants in the 1950s and '60s*.[106] In the Immigration Museum's 2002 replacement for *Impacts*, called *Getting In*, Australia's changing immigration policies were examined through the experiences of those who 'get in', and those who do not.[107] Linking the stories of immigration history and Aboriginal history has remained a trickier task. As Curthoys argued, "migration of all kinds, however desperate the circumstances of particular groups of migrants, has been

[104] Ibid, p. 11.
[105] Szekeres, in Finnimore, *Migration Museum*, p. 1.
[106] This temporary exhibition was on display from December 2010 until February 2011.
[107] See the exhibition's website, http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/whatson/current-exhibitions/getting-in/.

part of the processes of colonisation."[108] Migration history projects based in particular communities or regions, rather than nations, seem better suited to explore these complex stories.

Despite being a vanguard of the transnational approach to migration history, *Horizons* was one of the galleries targeted as part of the NMA's Gallery Refurbishment Program, sparked by the Carroll Review of 2003. Witcomb has revealed the ideological underpinnings of much of the Carroll Report's criticism of the exhibition, most importantly the rejection of a pluralist version of Australian history in favour of a more consensual story. However the committee's view that *Horizons* was "ill-focussed and confused" has some foundation in the haphazard development of the exhibition, and the attempt to tell stories beyond the usual migration experience.[109] This element of the criticism was possibly not as ideologically-fuelled - even Graeme Davison mentioned *Horizons* in his personal submission to the Carroll Report as being "perhaps the least satisfactory" of the galleries.[110] McShane felt that these problems stemmed from the abandonment of the 'journeys' idea:

> Once we'd moved away from *Journeys*, which I think had a strongly metaphysical synergy and a really strong narrative capacity; we were, to make a bad pun, adrift after that.[111]

Ironically, it was this idea of journeying that was revived in the reincarnation of the gallery. The new exhibition, *Australian Journeys*, pursued the transnational idea of 'flows' of people both to and from Australia, as well as the "experiences of sojourners, travellers and tourists", through individual spotlights.[112] Reviewing the new exhibition soon after it opened in 2009, Linda Young lamented the decision of the curators, like

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[108] Curthoys, "History for the Nation, or for the world?", p. 11.
[109] Commonwealth of Australia and John Carroll (Chair), *Review of the National Museum of Australia, its exhibitions and public programs: a report to the Council of the National Museum of Australia*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, p. 22, http://www.nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/2492/ReviewReport20030715.pdf.
[110] Graeme Davison, "Submission to the Committee of Review on Exhibitions and Public Programs at the National Museum of Australia," c2003, http://www.nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2414/Prof_Davison_r.pdf.
[111] McShane, Interview.
[112] Anon, "Visions Theatre, Australian Journeys, Request for Quotation," 22 March 2005, 05/393 Museum Enhancement Program – Gallery Refurbishment Initiative – Horizons/Journeys Av for Visions Theatre – Project Development.

those at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, to pursue a personal stories approach to the detriment of a deeper historical investigation of connections and continuities:

> The notion of human 'stories' as the way to enliven impersonal history has become the conventional wisdom of museums in the early twenty-first century. But somehow, 'stories' have become separated from purpose or narrative connection. In Australian Journeys, we see the low tide of narrative history and its consequence, a flotsam of stranded stories.[113]

So although *Australian Journeys* pushed further into the new territory of transnational history, in Young's estimation it shared the problems of past approaches by failing to locate visitors within complex changing social, historical and political contexts which give meaning to the objects and stories on display.[114]

Horizons was the lynch pin in this conceptual transition from inventing and democratising the 'nation of immigrants' to what we might call the 'citizens of the world' approach. It looked back as well as forward, telling a national story whilst gesturing to its wider implications. It was not the exhibition that earlier museum staff had imagined and planned for, but neither was it the exhibition that those who worked on it would have created if the allocation of resources and space had been different. But despite its limitations both conceptual and spatial, *Horizons* told a complex and multi-layered story of Australia's migration history, and in the process shed light on the way that ideas of race, empire and borders have shaped both the Australian population and national identity.

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[113] Linda Young, "Australian journeys" exhibition review, *reCollections*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2009, http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_4_no1/exhibition_reviews/australian_journeys.

[114] The curators of the exhibition have eloquently explained their conceptual approach of 'object biography' and how it was informed by contemporary scholarship on material culture. See Karen Schamberger et al, "Living in a material world: object biography and transnational lives," in Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott (eds), *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World,* Acton, ACT: ANU E Press, 2008, pp. 275-297.

Conclusion

Whose stories are we telling?

Viv Szekeres, the fiery director of the MMSA, had the task of opening the Museums Australia 2002 National Conference in Adelaide. The conference theme was 'Once upon our times: exploring the role of cultural institutions in creating, perpetuating and selling social, political and national myths'. It was chosen by Szekeres and the rest of the organising committee in light of the slew of nationalistic exhibitions funded during the previous year's Centenary of Federation, and the controversy still unfolding over national history at the NMA.[1] Present at the session were the South Australian Labor MP John Hill, and Howard's Minister for the Arts and Sport, Rod Kemp.[2] Szekeres clearly had her audience in mind.

She spoke about the power of myths. Drawing widely on historical examples ranging from the ancient Greeks to her own institution, Szekeres demonstrated that all myths serve a political purpose, and that museums are sites where these agendas are enacted. Governments of all persuasions, she argued, know that "the value of museums and art galleries lies largely in their power to construct, influence, or reinforce cultural norms or social change."[3] But it was curators, or "cultural workers" more broadly, who ultimately decided whose experience is represented. They controlled the myth-making process. Szekeres drove this point home as she concluded her speech, illustrating each potential curatorial choice with an image projected on a large screen:

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[1] Szekeres mentioned exhibitions about the Antarctic explorer Douglas Mawson, legendary cricketer Donald Bradman, bushranger Ned Kelly, racehorse Phar Lap and the television show Neighbours.
[2] Szekeres, Interview.
[3] Viv Szekeres, "Setting the Scene," paper presented to the Museums Australia National Conference, Adelaide, March 2002, http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/30569/20030625-0000/www.museumsaustralia.org.au/conf02/Papers/szekeresv.htm.

> Every time we choose to display this object (image of handkerchief belonging to Queen Adelaide), rather than that one (image of women's boots from the Destitute Asylum), this photograph (of all male Federation parliament 1901), rather than another one (photo of migrant women doing the washing), the history of these people (cartoon of Kangaroo on map of Australia pulling a boat of people to shore with caption 'Bring out a Brit') rather than these people (photo of 'children overboard' asylum seekers jumping to escape their sinking ship, *The Australian* 18.1.2002), we exercise a power of control. It is this power of control that I would call political. Not in any sense meaning party political but meaning that our choices carry consequences that often have far reaching implications. Through the choices we make every day, we decide whose voice will be heard and whose will be silenced. Whose stories are significant and whose are insignificant. We choose which ideas or works of art are of value.[4]

What a bold (and perhaps foolhardy) performance! This was March 2002, barely five months after the Howard Government had sped to electoral success on the back of their 'Pacific Solution' to the problem of unauthorised refugee arrivals. The incident Szekeres highlighted - the interception of the vessel SIEV 4 by Australian navy personnel and the subsequent claim by Howard's Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock that some asylum seekers on board had thrown their children into the sea - was the most contentious part of that "dark victory".[5] It had become the subject of a Select Committee inquiry established just the previous month, whose terms of reference included a report on the "federal government control of, and use of, information about the incident, including... photographs".[6] Using the picture at the heart of the 'children overboard' affair as an example of a story that should be told in Australian museums, but was not likely to gain government funding, was thus in itself a highly political choice. Szekeres remembers that "the audience erupted" and gave her a standing ovation. Minister Kemp "went very red and had conniptions... he was furious with me".[7] Her insubordination was made all the sweeter by Kemp's reaction, but she would soon find there was a price to pay. Two weeks after the conference, Szekeres received a letter informing her that her services on the Federal committee for Visions

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[4] Ibid. The descriptions of the images are part of Szekeres' own script.

[5] This is how David Marr and Marian Wilkinson described Howard's 2001 election in their book of the same title, *Dark Victory*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003.

[6] S.J. Odgers SC, "Report of Independent Assessor to Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident," Forbes Chambers, 21 August 2002, p. 3, http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/609205.The Select Committee was established by the Senate on 13 February 2002.

[7] Szekeres, Interview.

of Australia, the body that allocated funds for touring exhibitions, were no longer required.[8]

So why did Szekeres' comments matter? And to whom? They certainly mattered to the government in power, as the swift removal of the troublemaker from the Visions of Australia committee attests. The role of history, and national history in particular, had in the last decades of the twentieth century become more contentious and more important.[9] As we have seen, the 'nation of immigrants' was one national story that had been used by politicians and museums alike, albeit for different purposes. Szekeres' speech also mattered to the bulk of her audience, museum workers from all over Australia. During this time, which Anderson describes as an "intensely repressive" political climate for museum workers, where "almost no one was actually prepared to stand up and name it happening", Szekeres' apparent cheek was actually a strident call to arms for curators to be brave in the face of external pressures, and not to bow to the interests of their sponsors.[10] The enthusiastic response of the audience suggests they agreed with her. Lastly, as historians interested in how people understand the past, these events, and two decades of migration exhibitions before them, should matter to us. They remind us that curators choose which stories to tell, and in doing so, they can shape public and political debates about whose stories are important. This is what makes museum exhibitions an essential historical source – one that has until now only been used sparingly by historians.

If we want to know how Australians encounter and interact with their history, we have to take a multi-facetted approach. While historians have looked to historical fiction, film, family history, memorials and museums generally as experiences where people make sense of history, this study is the first in which a particular kind of museum exhibit has been isolated and tracked through time. It asserts that migration history exhibitions of the 1980s and 1990s are vital 'texts' that offer valuable insights into the way history both reflects and shapes debate in different political and social contexts.

[8] Ibid.
[9] Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: an Australian history of place*, Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2002, p. 7.
[10] Anderson, Interview.

By "challenging myth with reality, or myths with new myths" they tell many stories, and can also offer "alternate stories to those we have subliminally accepted."[11] The findings of this study challenge existing assumptions about the relationship between migration history and multiculturalism, and reveal how museums exhibitions have been used to define Australian culture and heritage, sometimes in opposition to both government demands and public sentiment.

Rather than the "multicultural migration exhibition", a cover-all label proposed by Mary Hutchison to describe early migration exhibitions, this thesis has found that migration exhibitions in the last part of the twentieth century fall into two phases. The first phase, between 1986 and 1995, can be understood as a challenge to previous museum narratives of nation and progress. These exhibitions brought to light events and policies that detracted from a progressivist narrative – such as the White Australia Policy, policies of assimilation, experiences of racism and the introduction of mandatory detention in the early 1990s. The response was not always supportive. At the PHM in Sydney in 1988, the board of trustees voted in favour of removing all references to "invasion" in the museum's *Australian Communities* exhibition. At the 1995 exhibition *Tolerance* at the NMA, government officials objected to material from Port Hedland Detention centre, declaring "no one is interested in refugees". These exhibitions, on the whole, demonstrated a critical deployment of the multicultural ethos.

In terms of the narrative of migration, this first phase of exhibitions cast the past as a chronological series of arrivals in the context of colonization, invasion and discriminatory immigration policy. Some exhibitions struggled with the tension between the dominant, British culture, and the 'minority' or 'ethnic' cultures that co-existed in post-1788 Australia, resulting in a blunderingly post-modern approach that bordered on what Goodman and Cochrane have dubbed "tactical pluralism". However, most were radical and revisionist in tone, challenging previous discovery and settlement narratives. Their political aims are encapsulated best by two key incidents –

[11] Daniels, "Exhibition Review," 222.

the decision to exhibit a history of migration at the first migration museum in Adelaide in 1986, rather than an 'ethnic museum' as proposed by the Edwards Report, and the assertion that for Aboriginal people, immigration is synonymous with invasion, which occurred at both the MMSA and the PHM in the late 1980s. These histories were profoundly unsettling, and played an important part in challenging consensual notions of national history during the bicentennial celebrations of 1988.

I do not want to suggest that these exhibitions are beyond critique or reappraisal, rather that their faults are better understood in an idealistic framework, similar to the rediscovery of women's history through second wave feminism. The emphasis on difference, discrimination and victimhood were part of this rediscovery of migration history in Australia, and these experiences were still alive in much of the post-Second World War migrant communities who participated in these history-making projects. As Hsu-Ming Teo has observed in her study of ethnic historiography, these so-called 'communities' were not transplanted into an Australian context, but were 'produced' by shared experiences of language, culture, and discrimination.[12] I would add that the process of negotiating and exhibiting migration history in museums in the late 1980s and early 1990s was part of this process of self-ethnicisation or identity-production for many communities. In this first phase it was restricted to mainly non-English-speaking migrants, and predominantly those who arrived during the post-Second World War boom. However in the second phase, as I have identified, the process is consciously (and ironically) 'democratised' by museums to include those whose cultures (and ethnicities) are 'mainstream'.

But what of the relationship with multicultural policy? Did museums merely follow where the funding led, or was the relationship more complex? Part 1 of this thesis demonstrated how museum workers and others in the cultural heritage sector were actively involved in shaping the direction of multicultural policy, contributing submissions to the 1989 *Agenda on a Multicultural Australia* and constantly critiquing their own interpretations of multiculturalism, cultural diversity and 'communities'. The

[12] Teo, "Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories," p. 149.

advocacy and activism within the museum community reflects the pragmatism of museum workers, who recognised multiculturalism as a progressive shift from previous policies, one that had to be harnessed in order to move beyond rhetoric and actually change museum practice. My analyses of the Heritage Collections Reports and *The Plan*, both projects of the Cultural Ministers Council arising from the 1989 *Agenda*, demonstrate this opportunism. The Heritage Collections Reports asserted that "objects of national heritage" – including those from culturally diverse communities – were under threat. Their mission, to incorporate these objects into national collections, and in doing so, "redefine the Australian consciousness", was the expression of a concern with stereotypical notions of Australian history and identity.[13] Migration history and its associated cultural heritage were used as a way to challenge these myths.

However, curators at the MMSA also knew that the impact of their public programs and exhibitions was limited to those who identified as 'migrants'. To many others, they were still seen as a 'wog museum' almost a decade after opening. This was a symptom of multiculturalism's unpopularity with many Australians. Multicultural policy was and remains widely misunderstood in Australian society, and as a result the association between multiculturalism and migration history proved problematic.

These associations came to the fore in the mid to late 1990s, the period that marks a shift in the exhibition of migration history away from the celebration of difference and the incorporation of ethnic minorities into the mainstream through the 'nation of immigrants', and towards the redefinition of migration as a national success story. A number of factors underlay the change, including an increasingly politically sanctioned backlash against multiculturalism, championed by respected historians such as Geoffrey Blainey, mainstream politicians such as the new Prime Minister John Howard, and at the extreme, populist agitators like Pauline Hanson. The pressure on museums to generate more of their own revenue, which had been growing since the Hawke budget of 1988-89, continued apace, encouraging exhibition teams to test their

[13] Consultative Committee on Cultural Heritage in a Multicultural Australia, *A plan for cultural heritage institutions to reflect Australia's cultural diversity*, p. 20.

stories, objects, exhibition titles and overall conceptual themes on prospective audiences, all the while trying to broaden their representation and increase visitor numbers. So in order to appeal to those who viewed multiculturalism negatively, as well as those who wanted their migrant ancestries and stories recognised, museums began to overtly democratise the migration narrative.

This second phase of exhibitions is best characterised by the opening galleries of the Immigration Museum in Melbourne in 1998, and *Tears, Fears and Cheers: Immigration to Australia 1788-1988* at the Australian National Maritime Museum in the same year. Unlike earlier exhibitions, both actively avoided an association between multicultural policy and migration history, and instead sought to politically diffuse the migration narrative through the use of statistics and personal stories. Together, these approaches cast the 'nation of immigrants' more as an inclusive story in which all Australians, with the exclusion of Indigenous Australians, could share. Being a 'migrant' was no longer the criteria for inclusion – the Immigration Museum encouraged visitors to acknowledge the "migration experience" in their life or family history. These representations were designed to "emphasise the similarities of immigration across time and culture", rather than the differences.[14] Curators at the ANMM readily admit they adapted a 'soft-sell' approach to immigration history, as the subject had become too politicised in public debate and any attempt to tell audiences what to think would simply turn them away. However, individual exhibitions such as *A Twist of Fate* at the MMSA took the opposite 'hard-sell' approach, aiming to make their visitors feel "very uncomfortable indeed" and to shake them into compassion and understanding for those who found their human rights denied. But exhibitions that took this approach found it hard to attract visitors.[15]

Part 2 of this thesis placed the shift towards the democratisation of immigrants both in the context of previous Australian migration exhibitions, and the success of Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York, which opened in 1990. Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett's visit to Ellis Island in 1995 re-invigorated plans for a migration museum in

[14] Gillespie, "Immigration Museum," p. 364.
[15] Szekeres, Interview.

Melbourne, ultimately contributing to the opening of the IM in 1995. Likewise, Ellis Island made a positive impression on Kevin Fewster, who was director of the ANMM throughout the 1990s. Fewster and Kennett both saw the potential of a memorial site of national history as a focus for commemoration and celebration of migration. The IM opened with a Tribute Garden in 1998, and ANMM unveiled the Welcome Wall in 1999. Both sites list family names, paid for by donations, in the same fashion as Ellis Island's American Immigrant Wall of Honor. The memorialisation of migration at Australian museum sites in the late 1990s expresses a self-consciously *national* narrative of arrivals, whist acknowledging the pre-existing occupation of the land by Indigenous peoples. This is in stark contrast to the Memorial Wall of plaques at the MMSA in Adelaide, which grew organically from the early 1990s as a way for community groups to commemorate the loss of their homelands through war and dictatorship, and the loss of loved ones. The trauma of forced or free migration, and its impact on individual lives and groups of people across national borders, rather than ideas of the 'nation' or 'contributory history', can be seen in this context as belonging to the earlier phase of migration exhibitions. These findings again challenge assumptions about earlier 'multicultural' projects and later 'sophisticated' ones.

Curator Gaye Sculthorpe has observed how "the very presence of Indigenous histories [in museums] is often confronting to non-Indigenous Australians".[16] Yet these histories have been present in Australian migration exhibitions for the past thirty years. Given the growing importance of Indigenous histories to our conception of what it means to be Australian, the ways in which museums have represented these stories outside dedicated Indigenous galleries deserve attention. How did the curators handle the tricky intersections of migration and Indigenous histories? Throughout the period assessed, 1984 – 2001, Indigenous Australians have remained the only group whose self-definition as non-migrants has been accepted by migration museums. There were attempts to move beyond the pre and post 1788 bifurcation of the national narrative from the start. In the first phase of exhibitions, Indigenous Australians were portrayed

[16] Gaye Sculthorpe, "Exhibiting Indigenous histories in Australian museums," in McIntyre and Wehner (eds), *Negotiating histories, national museums: conference proceedings,* p. 81.

as victims of colonisation, while, at the same time, their *survival* was asserted on their behalf. However, these exhibitions did not involve consultation with Indigenous communities themselves. In the second phase of migration exhibitions the theme of *impact* was the device through which Indigenous Australians were included in migration history, and Indigenous perspectives on the arrival of migrants were sought by museums. These perspectives were communicated through artworks, timelines, and occasionally though personal stories. At the IM in Melbourne these included a story of mixed marriage and a display on Aboriginal cultural traditions adapted and passed down through generations. Migration exhibitions also reflected new interpretations of contact history, emphasising cultural exchange and mutual curiosity as well as violence and dispossession. But despite these new approaches, the representation of Australia's first peoples was still limited, once more, to an 'Indigenous perspective' on the sidelines of the main 'national' story of migration. The peripheral nature of these inclusions has also served to limit the shared histories of displacement and migration, which many Indigenous Australians recognised. But their powerful and rightful claim to be portrayed as non-migrants means that exhibitions and museums dedicated to migration from *outside* Australia will perhaps always struggle, ironically, with the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in stories of migration, dispossession, loss of home and the making of new lives.

The two phases of migration history exhibitions posited in this thesis overturn the idea that what occurred was merely a shift from earlier uncritical exhibitions to later complex ones. Instead, exhibitions of the mid-1980s laid the radical foundation on and against which later exhibitions were built. The politics of identity and claims to cultural value from different groups (post-war migrants, Anglo Australians, and Indigenous Australians) have dominated the ways in which migrants have been defined and the way these definitions have changed. Both phases of exhibitions have been underpinned by a narrative of arrivals and settlings, whether chronological or thematic, which has limited the types of stories told, and ultimately undermined the attempt to cast Australia as a 'nation of immigrants'. The first permanent, national exhibition of migration history – the *Horizons* gallery at the NMA – symbolises these

limitations. The idea of a 'nation of immigrants' was not at the heart of this new museum, and migration history failed to find a distinctive voice amongst the other more powerful expressions of nation. However, *Horizons* did suggest new ways of framing Australian immigration history – through a deeper exploration of Australia's relationship to Empire, the policies which control the entry and exit of people, ideas, and goods in and out of the country, and the use of concepts such as 'exile' and 'home' to probe the deeper significance of migration to our imaginings of personal and national identity. In some ways, this 'failure' to nationalise migration history has served as a catalyst for curators to push new boundaries.

The past ten years of migration exhibitions, which fall outside the purview of this thesis, would be fruitful ground to explore these innovations. But there is still much spadework to be done on the earlier period, too. The collaborations between communities and museums, especially in community access galleries, are an area which deserves greater attention. Art galleries and libraries, as well as museums, were also players in this history. The nature of my research led me to concentrate on the perspective of curators, and how their decisions shaped exhibitions. Research that puts other groups in the spotlight, such as casual visitors, or school groups, or people demanding representation, would reveal different stories. There is also much scope to compare and contrast other types of exhibitions – so many remain waiting in the archives of museums, and the memories of those involved in them. This thesis has shown it is possible to re-imagine these exhibitions, even if they were dismantled long ago.

Australia has a rich history of exhibitions about migration history – from the opening of the first dedicated migration museum in the world in Adelaide in 1986, to the many small museums established by different diasporic groups across the continent. Other countries have since followed suit, and calls for new museums of migration have gained support in Europe and North America in recent years.[17] Even here in Australia,

[17] A Canadian immigration museum, Pier 21, opened in 1999. See Izida Zorde, "Constructing National History at Pier 21," MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2001. In 2009 it was given national museum status. UK Migration Museum http://www.migrationmuseum.org/. The Cité nationale de l'histoire de

there are sporadic proposals for more migration museums, and a national monument to Australia's migrants is currently being planned for Canberra's centenary in 2013.[18] The 'nation of immigrants' narrative is attractive to those who seek to unite diverse elements within the nation, but in many cases it has been stripped of its early radical and rebellious origins and the story is devoid of crucial social and political context. This thesis has reinstated the breadth and significance of the first two decades of migration exhibitions in Australia, in the hope that they will better inform new approaches to the past.

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l'immigration in Paris opened in 2007 as France's first immigration museum. See Green, "A French Ellis Island? Museums, Memory and History in France and the United States." Plans to create a migration museum in Britain are currently gaining momentum. Two preliminary reports have been released to date. See Migration Museum Working Group, "A Moving Story: Is there a case for a major museum of migration in the UK?" Discussion paper, Institute for Public Policy Research, July 2009: http://www.migrationmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ippr-a-moving-story.pdf, and Mary Stevens, "Stories Old and New: Migration and identity in the UK heritage sector," A report for the Migration Museum Working Group, Institute for Public Policy Research, July 2009, http://www.migrationmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ippr-Stories-Old-and-New.pdf.

[18] The NSW Labor Party promised a $16 million immigration and multiculturalism museum as part of their failed bid for re-election in the 2011. See Brian Robins, "ALP Goes All Out To Capture Migrant Vote," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 2011. A national memorial to Australia's immigrants, first proposed as a bridge over Lake Burley Griffin, is now planned to open on a site near the National Archives in Canberra in 2013. See Immigration Place Australia website, http://www.immigrationplace.com.au/.

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IV. EXHIBITIONS

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V. INTERVIEWS

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