

## THE CROATIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA

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As you will all be aware, Australia is a very multicultural society. Since 1945, seven million people have migrated to Australia (out of current population of 22.6 million). At the time of our most recent Census (2006), 24% of Australians (five million) were born overseas. At 30 June 2009, of the estimated resident population of Australia (22 million people) one quarter were born overseas (5.8 million people). Today around 44% of all Australians were either born overseas or had (or have) at least one overseas born parent. We identify with more than 270 ancestries. We speak over 260 languages, including indigenous languages. At the time of the 2006 Census, the top 20 languages spoken at home were:

	Language	Number of speakers	Percentage of population
1	English	15 581 334	78.5
2	Italian	316 893	1.6
3	Greek	252 276	1.3
4	Cantonese	244 558	1.2
5	Arabic	243 662	1.2
6	Mandarin	220 623	1.1
7	Vietnamese	194 885	1.0
8	Spanish	98 000	0.5
9	German	75 635	0.4
10	Hindi	70 008	0.4
11	Macedonian	67 832	0.3
12	Croatian	63 616	0.3
13	Aust Indigenous, nfd	55 698	0.3
14	Korean	54 625	0.3
15	Turkish	53 859	0.3
16	Polish	54 389	0.3
17	Tagalog (+ Filipino)	53 284 (+ 39 044)	0.3 (+ 0.2)
18	Serbian	52 531	0.3
19	French	43 217	0.2
20	Indonesian	42 037	0.2

## Australia's multicultural policy

The Australian government has recently launched a new multicultural policy, The People of Australia. This new policy makes a clear, strong and positive statement about: how the government and the people of Australia value and benefit from our cultural and linguistic diversity (1), and that this diversity operates within the broader aims of national unity, community harmony and maintenance of our democratic values (2). We hope that this firm statement of leadership on multicultural policy will help maintain our social cohesion, support social inclusion for Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds, and assist in countering marginalisation and extremism. The policy demonstrates that we value our cultural diversity and we hope will help put to rest some outdated views of what Australia stands for. The policy and its initiatives build on successful programs already in place and also fill gaps in current social policy. But unlike previous policies, this policy document moves beyond simply words to introduce three new initiatives to be launched this financial year — the influence of which will reach all Australians, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. The initiatives are: an independent Australian Multicultural Council, to include a Multicultural Ambassadors Program; a National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, and a Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program.

## Demographics of Croatians in Australia

In the most recent Australian Census (2006), 118 049 people said they had Croatian ancestry. Of those, 64 916 were born in Australia, 40 312 were born in Croatia, and 3874 were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Smaller numbers were born in a range of other countries. Of those born in Australia, 34 539 were second generation (both parents born overseas) and 29 108 were third (or later) generation (one or both parent/s born in Australia). At the time of the Census, most Croatian Australians resided in New South Wales, the most populous state (40 768), followed by Victoria (38 934), Western Australia (15 561), Queensland (9966), South Australia (7540) and the Australian Capital Territory (4199). In addition, there were 367 permanent arrivals that were born in Croatia, arriving between 2006 Census date and 31 December 2010. One feature of the Croatian community in Australia is ageing — with the 2006 Census indicating that 43% of the Croatian-born population aged 60 years or older. If this trend continues then the Croatian-born population is likely to dramatically decrease in the next decade or so. But these figures are rather unreliable, as Croatians are not always visible in the statistics. For example most migrants to Australia before 1914 described as “Austrians” were actually from the islands and coast of Croatia. Some-

times Croatians are listed as Italians, Slavonians or Yugoslavs — for example separate data on Croatian-born persons was not captured by the census prior to 1996 (i.e. they would have been recorded as Yugoslav).

## History of migration

I will not go into great detail on the history of Croatian migration to Australia as I note many of the experts are here in this room as I am sure they will provide all the details of their research during the course of this conference. Suffice to say very few Croatians arrived in Australia much before 1850. Historical research shows that it is likely that the first person of Croatian descent arrived as a convict in 1813. More settlers came in the second half of the 19th century, prompted in part by strong hostility to Austro-Hungarian rule. By 1854 at least two Croatians were working in the Victorian gold fields. The first Croatian arrived in Western Australia in 1858 and worked in the goldfields. From the 1870s Croatians joined boats leaving from Italy, organised by shipping companies and their agents — many of these were from coastal areas where there were traditions of seafaring. Another cause for emigration from Croatia at this time was the phylloxera disease, which ravaged the wine industry in Dalmatia. By 1900, a substantial number of Croatian migrants had arrived in Australia, mainly from Dalmatia. Chain migration significantly contributed to early Croatian migration, with the largest number coming from Dalmatia, Istra and the Croatian Littoral areas. Many of those coming from Istra are recorded as having Italian rather than Croatian heritage. Migration from Croatia resumed in the 1920s, mainly from regions of Međimurje and continued until the Second World War. The 1933 Census listed 2830 Yugoslav-born in Australia and over half of these, many of them Croatians, lived in Western Australia (many of these became important to the wine industry in the Swan Valley). Others could be found on the Queensland canefields, in tobacco cultivation in Queensland; also in the fishing industries in South and Western Australia and in mining areas (i.e. Broken Hill and Kalgoorlie) — the current mayor of Kalgoorlie is of Croatian descent. Most of the immigrants were poor, lowly educated farmers and fishermen with poor English language skills. They helped to develop much of rural Australia.

In 1947, more than 5000 Croatians lived in Australia, mostly from the coastal regions of Dalmatia (mainly from the Makarska area and the island of Korčula) — they made up 80% of all migrants from the former Yugoslavia at that time. The post Second World War immigration of Croatians to Australia can be divided into four phases: The first phase began after the Second World War and continued up to the 1960s, made up mainly of members of the defeated military forces and refugees. Immediately after the Second World War, the Australian

Yugoslavia-born population quadrupled from 5870 in 1947 to 22 860 in 1954. Many migrated under the Displaced Persons Scheme and a significant number of those were Croatian speakers. The migration of displaced persons peaked in 1958. However, unlike other displaced persons groups, the Yugoslavia-born (including Croatians) continued to increase in numbers through the next two decades. They were the first to establish clubs and organisations for the Croatian community. The second phase was during the 1960s when the then Yugoslavia opened its borders which saw a massive departure of “temporary” workers to Western European countries with many of those “temporary” workers becoming permanent migrants to countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. Between 1961 and 1976 almost 100 000 Yugoslavia-born people took advantage of this opportunity and migrated to Australia. Many of these settlers were Croatians. The Yugoslavia-born population reached 129 620 by the 1971. This wave also included a number who arrived under an agreement with Yugoslavia finalised in 1970. This second phase was the largest wave and included those who migrated for political, economic and ideological reasons. Many in this group were from the lower socio-economic strata, were poorly educated and came from the poorer rural regions. Most settled in industrial suburbs, worked in industries like car manufacturing and construction. Many were involved in large scale infrastructure projects such as the development of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme in the 1950s and 1960s and the construction of the new Parliament House in Canberra in the 1980s. The third phase, during the 1980s, saw an increase in transcontinental migration and decrease of “temporary” workers. Migration to Australia during this period was mainly through family reunion programs and the skilled migration program, which saw a different migrant — those who were well educated professionals. The Yugoslavia-born population reached 160 480 by the 1991 Census. The fourth phase was made up of those escaping the conflicts of the 1990s. Almost 30 000 settlers from the republics of the former Yugoslavia migrated to Australia since 1991. Most of these new arrivals came under Australia’s Humanitarian programme. Many were Croatians, in particular from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Interestingly, there was a collective return to Croatia of around 1000 Croatian migrants during 1948 and 1949 on boats purchased by the Yugoslav government, which was unparalleled in Australian migration history — but many soon re-emigrated and started life anew in Australia.

Compared to 67.9% of the total overseas-born population in Australia, 81.9% of the Croatia-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 1996. Among the total Croatia-born in Australia at the 2006 Census, 9.7% arrived between 1996 and 2000 and 5.1% arrived during 2001 and 2006. There were 51

860 Croatia-born people in Australia at the 2001 Census, making up 1.3% of the overseas-born population.

## Community dynamics

Croatian Australians are very proud of their Croatian heritage and maintain interest and links with Croatia. They have developed their own associations, social and sporting clubs, political organisations (many of the Croatian political parties have representation/branches in Australia), media and religious institutions, welfare organisations, language schools, folkloric, drama and musical groups and even aged-care homes. The Croatian welfare associations have provided assistance to new immigrants, including assistance with English language classes, with legal issues, with domestic violence and other social issues and more recently with issues facing an ageing community. Of all the sporting associations, soccer (football) is particularly important in the Croatian community with a large number of football clubs — in the 2006 World Cup seven of the players in the Australian national team were of Croatian ancestry and three of the players on the Croatian national team were Croatians from Australia. In the area of language there are Croatian language schools and a Croatian Studies Centre at Macquarie University in Sydney. An interesting statistic from the 2006 census is the main languages spoken at home by Croatia-born people in Australia were Croatian (64.7%), English (16.7%) and Serbian (11.8%). Of the 42 340 Croatia-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 75.9% spoke English very well or well and 23.1% spoke English not well or not at all. In the area of media, there is a community radio, TV, a Croatian language program on the national multicultural broadcaster SBS, and Croatian language newspapers. Some states even have Croatian Chambers of Commerce or business associations.

Another interesting statistic is the high level of uptake of Australian citizenship by Croatian Australians. At the 2006 Census, the estimated rate of Australian Citizenship for the Croatia-born in Australia was 96.7%, whereas the estimated rate for all overseas-born was only 75.6%.

Australia has greatly benefited from the contribution made by people of Croatian heritage — many of whom have distinguished themselves in all walks of life, not just in Australia, but internationally. They include actors, sportspeople, artists, lawyers, politicians and business people. Croatians are fully integrated into Australian society. Nowadays Croatians are closely connected (or re-connected) to Croatia — they regularly return to Croatia (some every year) and keep closely in touch with events in Croatia. Many of those with Croatian heritage are visiting Croatia for the first time to discover their roots, their culture and their heritage.