Community Information Summary

Malaysia-born

Historical Background

There is a long history of contact between Australia and Malaysia. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Malays were involved in the pearling industry and the collection of trepang (sea slugs) off Australia’s northern coast.

Early colonial census records in 1871 show 149 people born in the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements residing in Australia. This increased to 932 people by 1901. The 1911 Census recorded 782 'Malaya-born' in Australia. Both the 1911 and 1947 Censuses of the Malaya-born included persons born in Singapore, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island.

The first significant intake of Malaysians to Australia occurred with the Colombo Plan from 1950, which brought nearly 17 000 overseas students to Australia, the majority of whom were Malaysians. Many of the students married locally, later sponsoring their parents or siblings. Malaysians have one of the highest rates of intermarriage with Australians.

In the late 1960s, the Malaysian Government introduced affirmative action policies favouring indigenous Malays. These policies combined with factors, such as race riots and unfavourable socio-political conditions, had a negative impact on Chinese and other minorities in Malaysia. Many Malaysians left the country during this period migrating to Australia and other countries.

The population of the Malaysia-born in Australia almost doubled between the 1986 and 1991 Censuses (from 33 710 to 71 740 people).

Today

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 116 196 Malaysia-born people in Australia, an increase of 25.8 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 39 791 followed by New South Wales (27 257), Western Australia (24 967) and Queensland (12 790).

Refer to Figure 1.
**Age and Sex**

The median age of the Malaysia-born in 2011 was 39 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 5.5 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 16.9 per cent were 15-24 years, 36.3 per cent were 25-44 years, 32 per cent were 45-64 years and 9.2 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Malaysia-born in Australia, there were 52 866 males (45.5 per cent) and 63 329 females (54.5 per cent). The sex ratio was 83.5 males per 100 females.

**Ancestry**

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Malaysia-born people reported were Chinese (79 714), Malay (16 874) and Indian (7502).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses*, 33 620 responses were towards Malay ancestry.

*At the 2011 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question; therefore providing the total responses and not persons count.

**Language**

The main languages spoken at home by Malaysia-born people in Australia were English (37 840), Mandarin (27 932) and Cantonese (26 830).

Of the 78 356 Malaysia-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 92.6 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 6.5 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
**Religion**

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Malaysia-born were Buddhism (29,334), Catholic (16,793) and Islam (7,224).

Of the Malaysia-born, 16.3 per cent stated ‘No Religion’ which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 3.5 per cent did not state a religion.

**Arrival**

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 56.3 per cent of the Malaysia-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Malaysia-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 16.3 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 24.1 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.

**Median Income**

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Malaysia-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $703, compared with $538 for all overseas-born and $597 for all Australia-born. The total Australian population had a median individual weekly income of $577.
Qualifications

At the 2011 Census, 70.6 per cent of the Malaysia-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non-school qualifications compared to 55.9 per cent of the Australian population.

Of the Malaysia-born aged 15 years and over, 12.1 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

Employment

Among Malaysia-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 67.5 per cent and the unemployment rate was 6.8 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 68 705 Malaysia-born who were employed, 63 per cent were employed in either a skilled managerial, professional or trade occupation. The corresponding rate in the total Australian population was 48.4 per cent.