Community Information Summary

Malta-born

Historical Background

The first Malta-born arrived in Australia as convicts in 1810, followed by the first free settler in 1838. The first organised migrant group arrived in 1883 when 61 Maltese labourers were recruited to work on the sugar plantations in Queensland. Many of these migrants returned to Malta because of the harsh working conditions they experienced.

Migration from Malta to Australia gradually increased after 1905. The 1911 Australian Census reported 248 Malta-born residents. Between 1911 and 1919 a further 2000 migrated. The 1933 Census recorded 2782 Malta-born in Australia.

Immigration from Malta increased after 1944, when Maltese migrants were classified as 'white British subjects' for the purposes of Australia's immigration policy. In 1948 the Maltese were offered assisted migrant passage to Australia, and by 1954 in excess of 10 000 Maltese had settled in Australia. The majority of those who came to Australia left Malta because of poor socio-economic conditions or in response to government schemes to decrease Malta's population.

Before World War II, the Malta-born in Australia had been engaged in a wide range of activities including mining, sugar cane plantation work, railway construction and maintenance, forestry and urban industries. Maltese Clubs were formed in the 1920s in Adelaide, Broken Hill, Innisfail, Mackay, Melbourne and Sydney. In the post-war period the industrial centres, especially Melbourne and Sydney, became the major areas of Maltese settlement.

Most of the Maltese migrants who came in the 1950s were semi-skilled or unskilled workers and many were poorly educated, although a small number of Maltese medical practitioners also came to Australia. The 1981 Census recorded 57 000 Malta-born people in Australia. The numbers of Malta-born in Australia are expected to decline as the community ages.

Today

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 41 274 Malta-born people in Australia, a fall of 5.6 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 19 730 followed by New South Wales (15 853), Queensland (2654) and South Australia (1569).

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

The median age of the Malta-born in 2011 was 64 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 0.4 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 0.6 per cent were 15-24 years, 5.1 per cent were 25-44 years, 47.3 per cent were 45-64 years and 46.5 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Malta-born in Australia, there were 20,989 males (50.9 per cent) and 20,285 females (49.1 per cent). The sex ratio was 103.5 males per 100 females.

**Ancestry**

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Malta-born people reported were Maltese (37,706), English (2710) and Australian (553).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses*, 163,990 responses were towards Maltese 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 Malta-born people in Australia were Maltese (23,559), English (16,789) and Italian (397).

Of the 24,486 Malta-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 88.1 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 10.4 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
Religion

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliation amongst Malta-born were Catholic (37,817) and Anglican (413).

Of the Malta-born, 2.7 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 1.8 per cent did not state a religion.

Arrival

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 93.8 per cent of the Malta-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Malta-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 0.9 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 0.9 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.

Median Income

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Malta-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $360, 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, 33 per cent of the Malta-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 Malta-born aged 15 years and over, 0.7 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

Employment

Among Malta-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 35.7 per cent and the unemployment rate was 3.5 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 13 665 Malta-born who were employed, 36.8 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.