Community Information Summary

Myanmar-born

Historical Background

The first Myanmar people to settle in Australia were the so called ‘Anglo-Burmese’. The Anglo-Burmese were of Myanmar and European descent, and emerged as a distinct community through relations between the British and other European settlers and the indigenous peoples of Myanmar. Myanmar was administered by the British from 1886 as Burma.


Since 1988, more Myanmar people fled the country due to ethnic tensions and government oppression. An estimated one million Myanmar people fled to neighbouring countries, predominantly Thailand. Significant numbers have arrived in Australia as refugees, often after long stays in refugee camps.

Myanmar Australian communities are ethnically diverse, each with their own unique dialects, beliefs and customs, reflecting the ethnic makeup of Myanmar. Members of Myanmar communities have tended to self-identify based on ethnicity.

Today

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 21 760 Myanmar-born people in Australia, an increase of 75.8 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed Western Australia had the largest number with 7456 followed by Victoria (5607), New South Wales (5159) and Queensland (1897).

Refer to Figure 1
**Age and Sex**

The median age of the Myanmar-born in 2011 was 41 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 13.9 per cent were 15-24 years, 38 per cent were 25-44 years, 29.2 per cent were 45-64 years and 12.9 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Myanmar-born in Australia, there were 10,554 males (48.5 per cent) and 11,208 females (51.5 per cent). The sex ratio was 94.2 males per 100 females.

**Ancestry**

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Myanmar-born people reported were Burmese (11,606), Karen (3,478) and Chinese (2,180).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses*, 20,112 responses were towards Burmese 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 Myanmar-born people in Australia were Burmese (10,407), English (4,150) and Karen (3,517).

Of the 17,610 Myanmar-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 60.4 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 37.9 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
Religion

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Myanmar-born were Buddhism (6539), Baptist (5805) and Catholic (4491).

Of the Myanmar-born, 2.3 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 1.5 per cent did not state a religion.

Arrival

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 43.4 per cent of the Myanmar-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Myanmar-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 13.1 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 40.2 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.

Median Income

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Myanmar-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $374, 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, 46.4 per cent of the Myanmar-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 Myanmar-born aged 15 years and over, 17.5 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

**Employment**

Among Myanmar-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 52.5 per cent and the unemployment rate was 9.3 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 9589 Myanmar-born who were employed, 39.7 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.