Community Information Summary

Thailand-born

Historical Background

Thailand does not have a history of migration in large numbers to other countries. Most of those who came to Australia before the 1980s were either married to Australians or were former students. Many of the students had been sponsored under various schemes, notably the Colombo Plan and military traineeships.

During the 1980s, a large number of Thai students came to Australia, including for short courses in English language training. By 1986, the Thailand-born population rose to 6998 people, half of whom were of Thai ancestry. In Thailand, the population comprises of various ethnic groups such as Thai, Chinese, Khmer, Mon, as well as indigenous groups such as the Semang, Lana and Chao Nam.

Over the centuries, Thailand has been home to displaced people from neighbouring countries. In 1975 a large number of Indochinese refugees were accommodated in border encampments in Thailand. Australia accepted many of the refugees for settlement.

More than half of the Thailand-born arrived in the past ten years, with many as family migrants.

Most Thais are followers of Theravada Buddhism. A growing network of wats or temples provides spiritual and cultural focus for many Thai Australians.

Today

Geographic Distribution

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 45 465 Thailand-born people in Australia, an increase of 48.8 per cent from the 2006 Census. The 2011 distribution by state and territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 17 541 followed by Victoria (10 766), Queensland (7022) and Western Australia (5662).

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

The median age of the Thailand-born in 2011 was 31 years compared with 45 years for all overseas-born and 37 years for the total Australian population.

The age distribution showed 12.3 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 14.3 per cent were 15-24 years, 53.8 per cent were 25-44 years, 17.8 per cent were 45-64 years and 1.8 per cent were 65 years and over.

Of the Thailand-born in Australia, there were 14 852 males (32.7 per cent) and 30 612 females (67.3 per cent). The sex ratio was 48.5 males per 100 females.

**Ancestry**

In the 2011 Census, the top ancestry responses* that Thailand-born people reported were Thai (34 015), Chinese (4171) and Karen (2089).

In the 2011 Census, Australians reported around 300 different ancestries. Of the total ancestry responses*, 45 635 responses were towards Thai 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 Thailand-born people in Australia were Thai (29 786), English (8305) and Karen (2351).

Of the 37 160 Thailand-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 77.6 per cent spoke English very well or well, and 20.7 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.
Religion

At the 2011 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Thailand-born were Buddhism (33,455), Baptist (2,152) and Catholic (1,899).

Of the Thailand-born, 6.9 per cent stated 'No Religion' which was lower than that of the total Australian population (22.3 per cent), and 2.4 per cent did not state a religion.

Arrival

Compared to 62 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 38.3 per cent of the Thailand-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 2001.

Among the total Thailand-born in Australia at the 2011 Census, 23.1 per cent arrived between 2001 and 2006 and 32.8 per cent arrived between 2007 and 2011.

Median Income

At the time of the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Thailand-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was $390, 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, 56.2 per cent of the Thailand-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 Thailand-born aged 15 years and over, 13.2 per cent were still attending an educational institution. The corresponding rate for the total Australian population was 8.6 per cent.

**Employment**

Among Thailand-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 66.4 per cent and the unemployment rate was 8 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 65 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.

Of the 24 076 Thailand-born who were employed, 37.3 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.

*Produced by Community Relations Section of DIAC*


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