

The Australian Women's Register

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Philippines Born Community of Australia

Summary

While most Philippines-born settlement in Australia is comparatively recent, contact between indigenous Australians and Filipino sailors in the north of the continent extends back well before Europeans arrived. Early census data shows that some of the sojourners stayed for good: there were approximately 700 Philippines-born persons in Australia at the turn of the century, mainly in Western Australia and Queensland.

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 led to the introduction of policies excluding non-Europeans from entry to Australia (colloquially known as the 'White Australia Policy'). This resulted in a significant decrease in the number of Philippines-born settlers in Australia. The number of Filipinos was down to 141 at the time of the 1947 Australian Census, and it was not until the 1950s that the population began to increase.

Significant numbers of Filipino students were allowed entry to Australia under the Colombo Plan and many chose to stay after graduation. An immigration policy reform in 1966 allowed well-qualified non-Europeans to immigrate to Australia. The Filipino population approximately doubled between every Census (every 5 years) to 1991, making it one of the fastest growing overseas-born populations in Australia.

The final repudiation of the 'White Australia Policy' and the declaration of martial law in the Philippines in 1972 led to rapid growth in the Philippines-born population in Australia over the next two decades. During the 1970s, many Filipino women migrated as spouses of Australian residents. Since then, most of the Philippines-born settlers have been sponsored by a family member.

Most Filipino migration occurred during the 1980s, peaking in 1987-1988. In the 1990s, settler arrivals began to decline and the growth in the Philippines-born population slowed. The 1991 Census recorded 73,673 living in Australia.

Details

The latest Census in 2001 recorded 103,990 Philippines-born persons in Australia, an increase of 12 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 52,240 followed by Victoria (22,500), Queensland (15,450) and Western Australia (5,400).

The median age of the Philippines-born in 2001 was 38.2 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas-born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed 8.9 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 15.9 per cent were 15-24 years, 43.6 per cent were 25-44 years, 27.0 per cent were 45-64 years and 4.7 per cent were 65 and over. Of the Philippines-born in Australia, there were 35,840 males (34.5 per cent) and 68,150 females (65.5 per cent). The sex ratio was 52.6 males per 100 females.

In 2001, of Philippines-born people aged 15 years and over, 58.8 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Among the Philippines born, 38.3 per cent had higher qualifications* and 10.0 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. Of the Philippines-born with no qualifications, 25.8 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

At the 2001 Census, the rate* of Australian Citizenship for the Philippines-born in Australia was 93.5 per cent. The rate for all overseas-born was 75.1 per cent.

Published resources

Report

Mail Order Brides: A West Australian Study on Filipino Australian Marriages, Vogels, Guido, 1984

The Situation of Filipino Brides in the Northern Areas of Western Australia, Scaramella, Maria

Archival resources

State Library of Victoria

Records, ca. 1983-1991. [manuscript]

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